寿命を買い取ってもらった。

一年につき一万円で。

I sold my life for ten thousand yen per year.

2

the second volume

JUMP COMICS+

三秋縋 原作 × 漫画 田口囁一

（メディアワークス文庫「三日間の幸福」）

キャラクターデザイン E9L・田口囁一

寿命を買い取ってもらった。一年につき、一万円で。

I Sold Off My Lifespan, For 10,000 Yen A Year.

Chapter 7

Original: Sugaru Miaki **Manga:** Shoichi Taguchi
("Three Days of Happiness" from Media Works Bunko)
Character Design: E9L / Shoichi Taguchi

What Himeno and I were waiting for

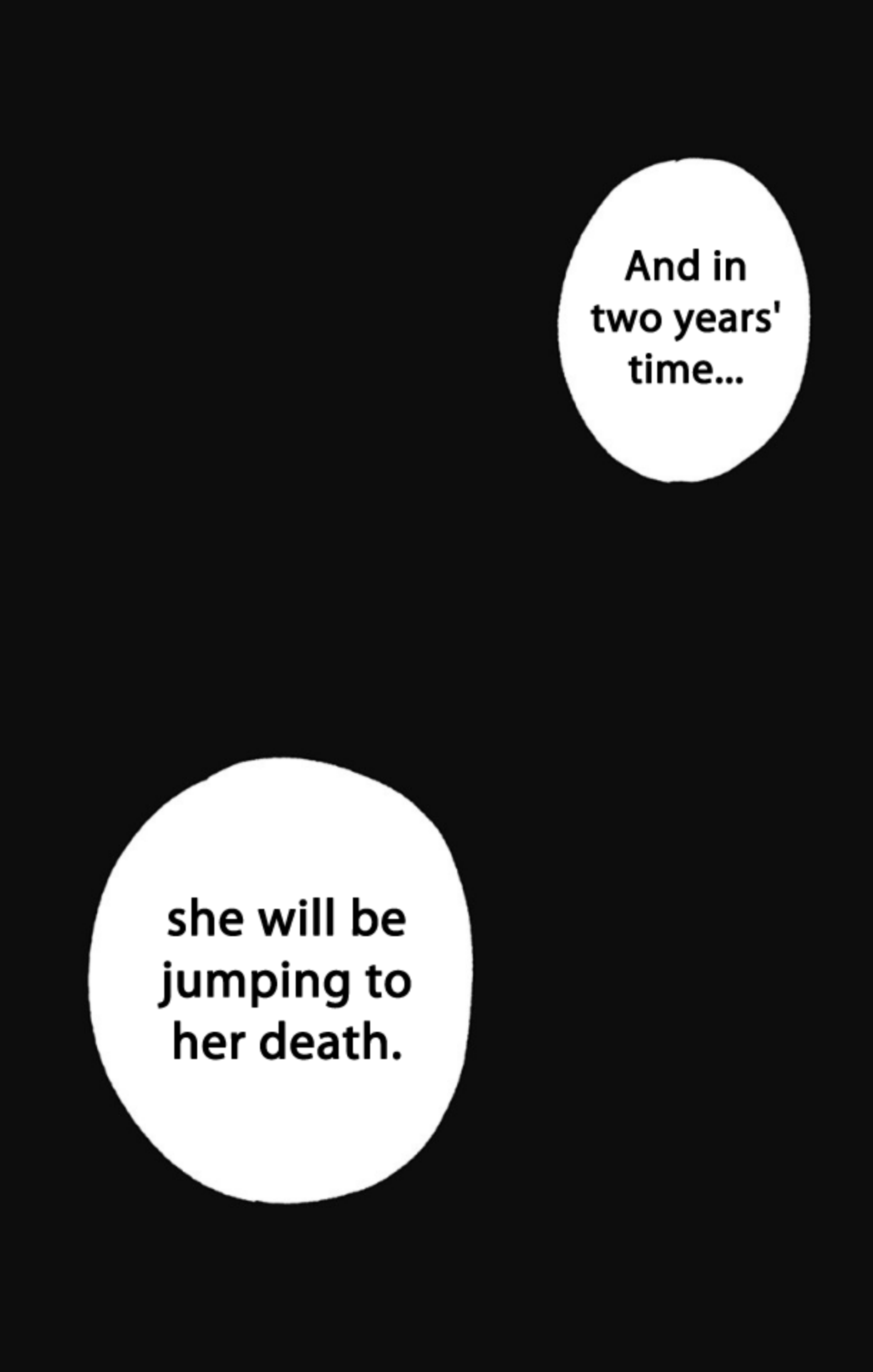
was "something" that validated our existence,

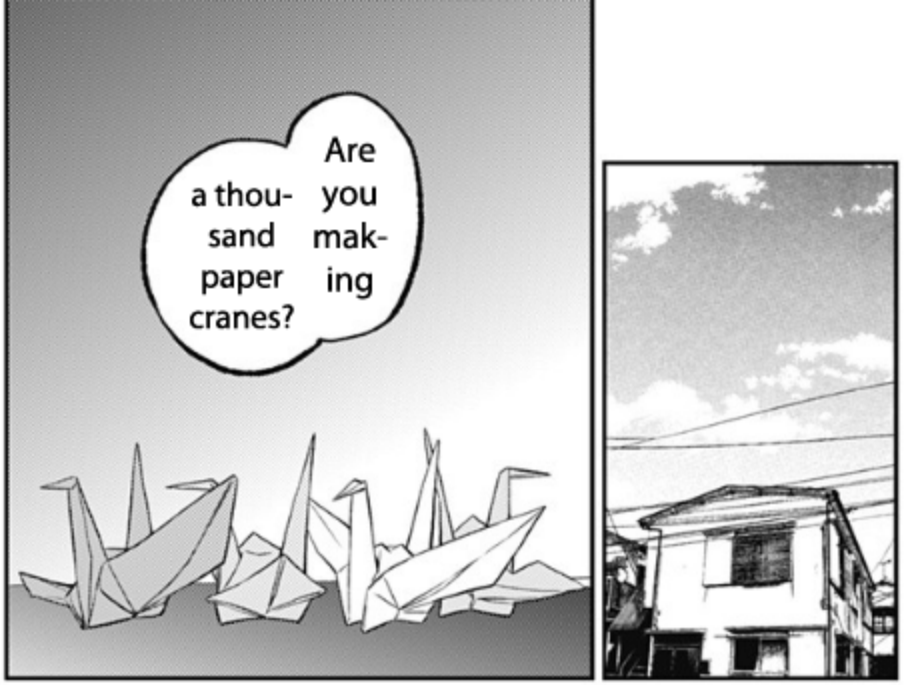
"something" that made up for everything.

And if they don't, it won't be worth it.

... About Ms. Himeno.
Circumstances led her to give birth to a child at seventeen.

She then dropped out of high school and married at eighteen, but divorced two years later.
Now, at twenty, she's raising the child by herself.
...

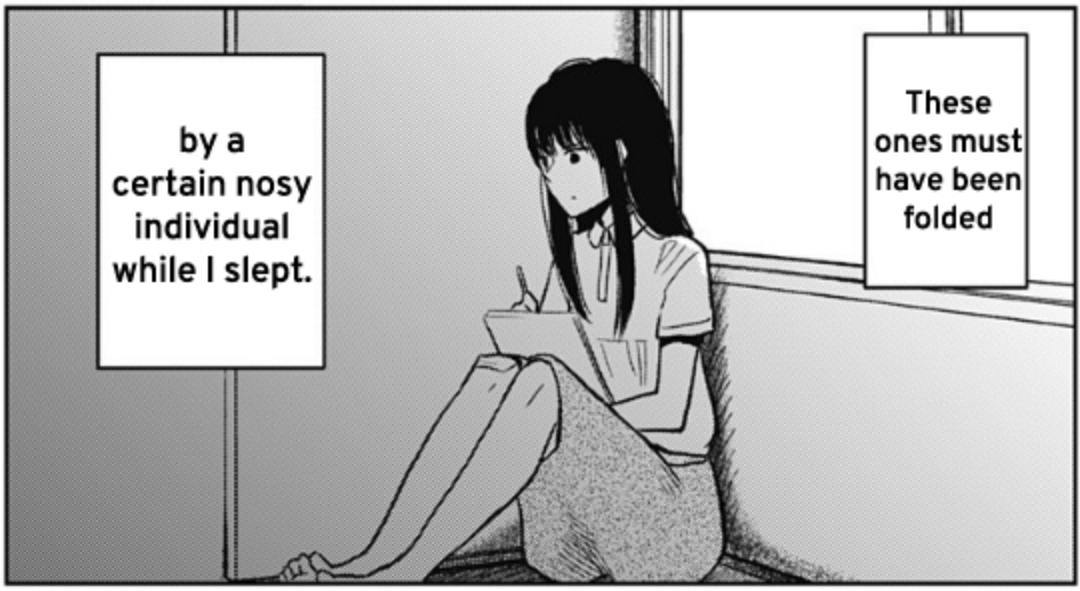

And in two years' time...
she will be jumping to her death.


Are you making a thousand paper cranes?

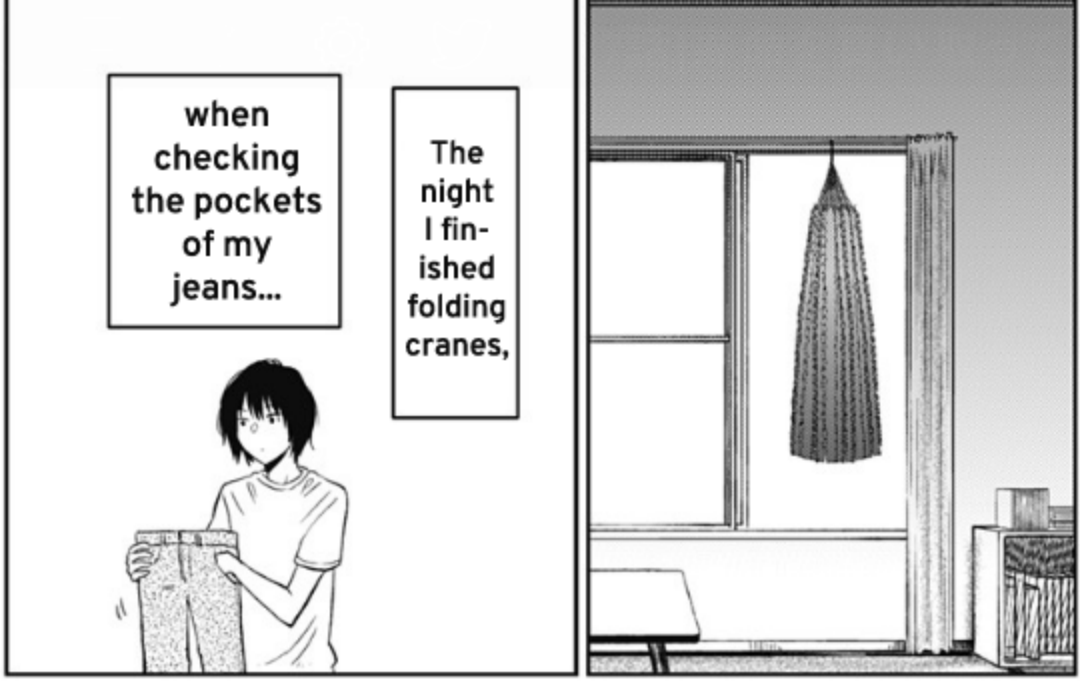
To wish myself a happy life as I head toward death.
To what end?
You intend to do this all by yourself?

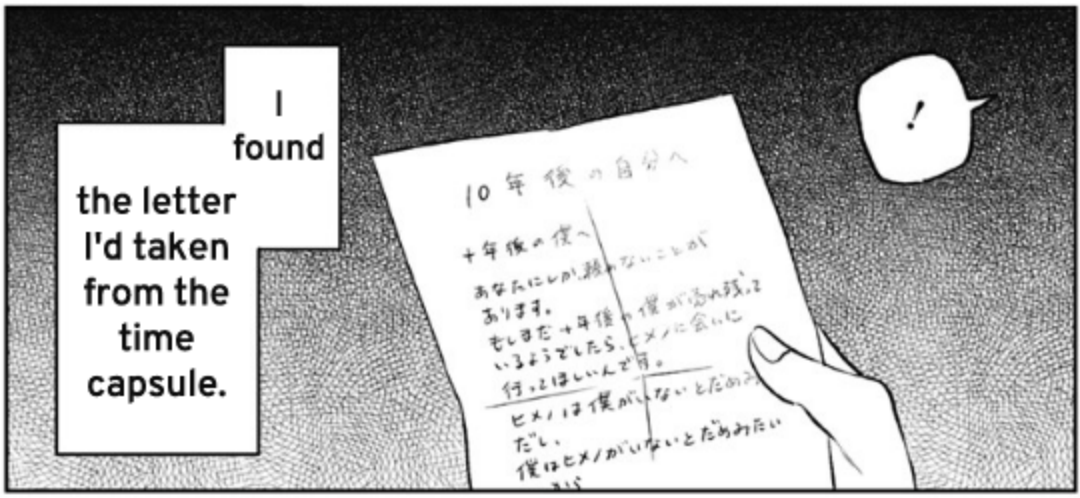
I filled the drab apartment with paper cranes of many colors.
I enjoyed the pointless work.

881...
882...
883...
!
As I went through recounting the cranes,
I found many that were too good to believe I made them.


These ones must have been folded
by a certain nosy individual while I slept.

That went way too quickly...


when checking the pockets of my jeans...
The night I finished folding cranes,


I found the letter I'd taken from the time capsule.
10年後の自分へ
!

To me ten years from now:
You're the only one I can count on to do this.
It went like this.

If I'm still on the shelf in ten years,

I want you to meet Himeno.

Because Himeno's hopeless without me,

and I'm hopeless without Himeno.

Sure,
it might just bring me even more pain.
But,
until I see it with my own eyes,
I can't give up.

Just one last time,
And...
I want to talk with her.
As thanks for giving me life,
I want to give her the 300,000 yen I got from selling it.

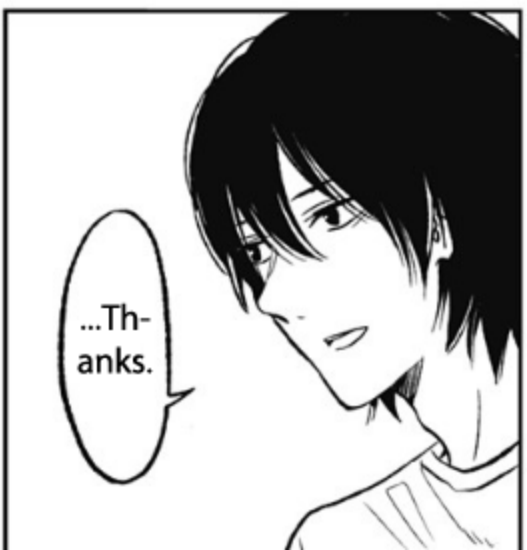
I won't stop you.
I can't say I don't understand the feeling myself.

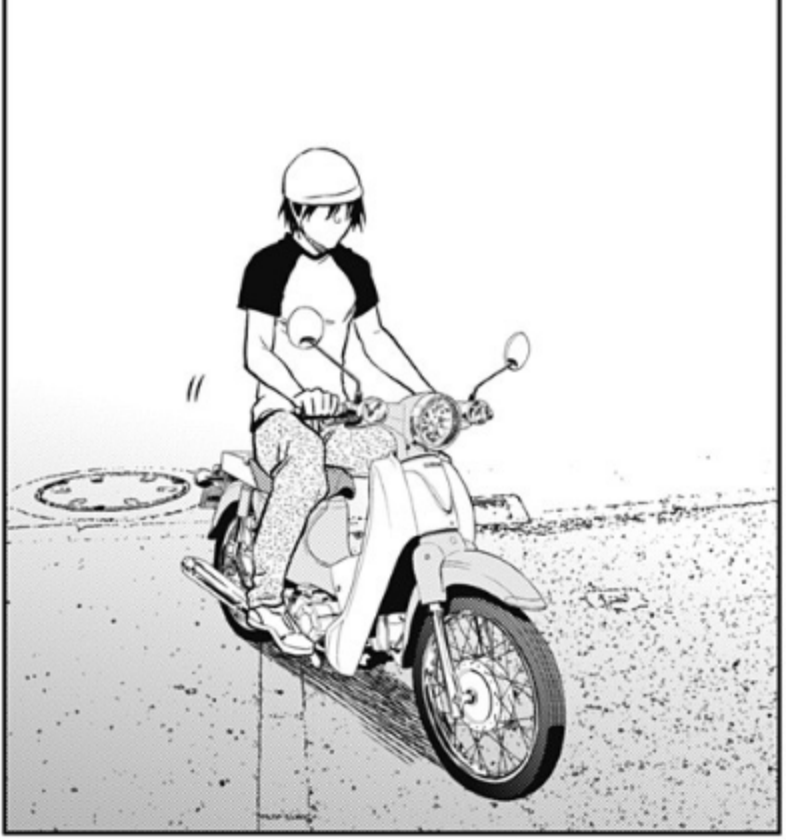
Maybe even tomorrow,
I'm thinking of going to Himeno's house.
You know if she's at her parents' place?
Indeed.
It seems she's been depending on them ever since her husband left.

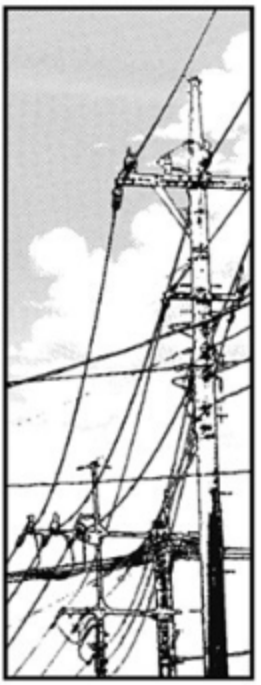
Don't bring up her name so lightly.
I especially don't want to hear it out of your mouth.
Is that so.
I'll be more cautious henceforth.
!

...

whew
Don't mention it.

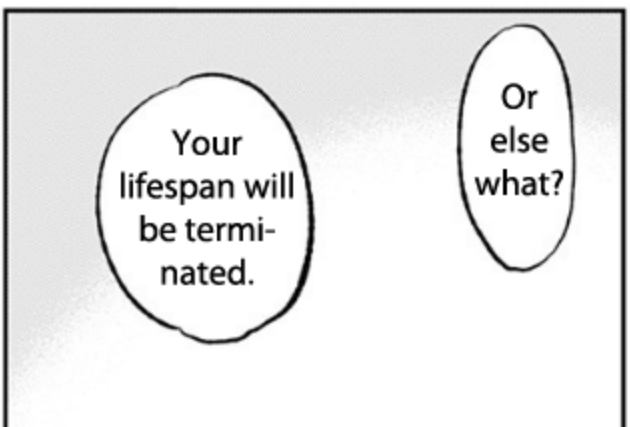

...Thanks.

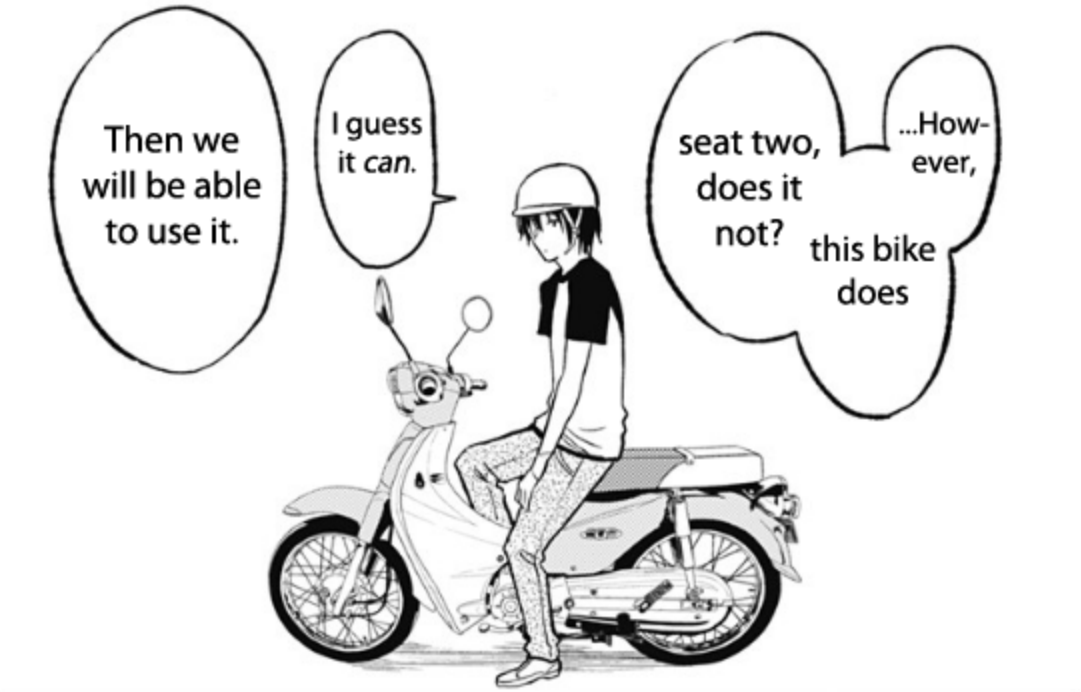




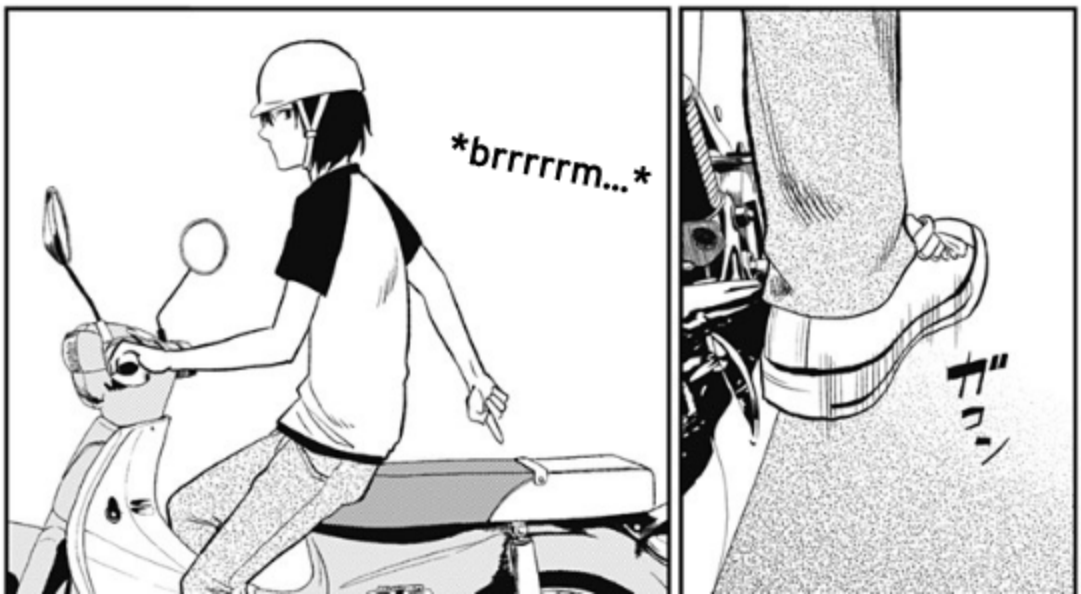
must not be separated by any more than 100 meters.
An observer and their target

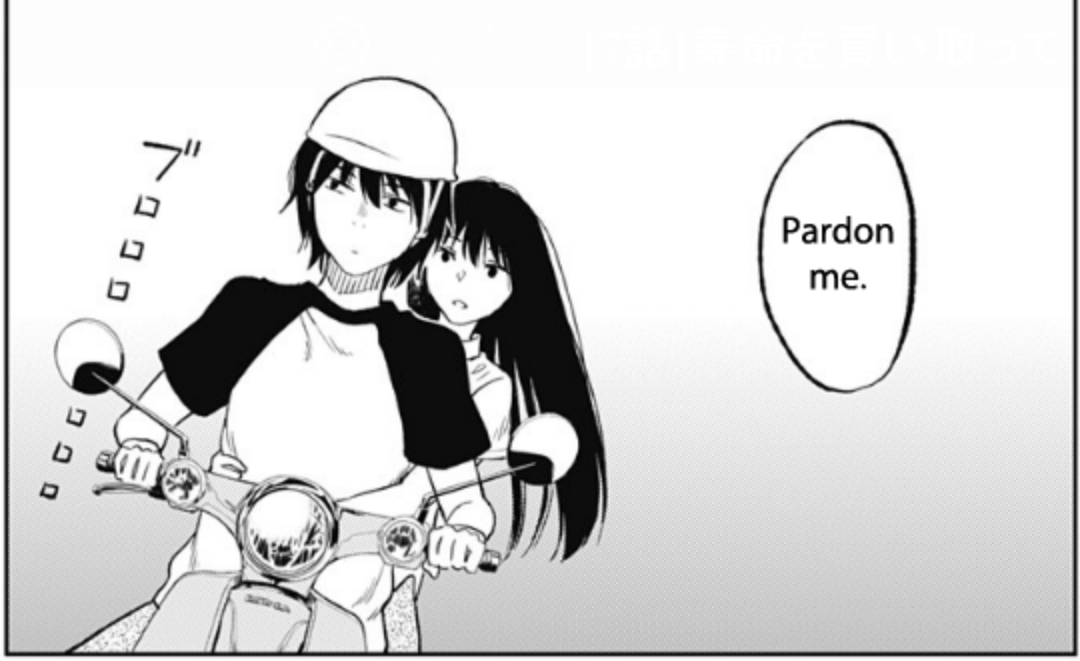
I must apologize, but...
I can't let you go too far on your own.

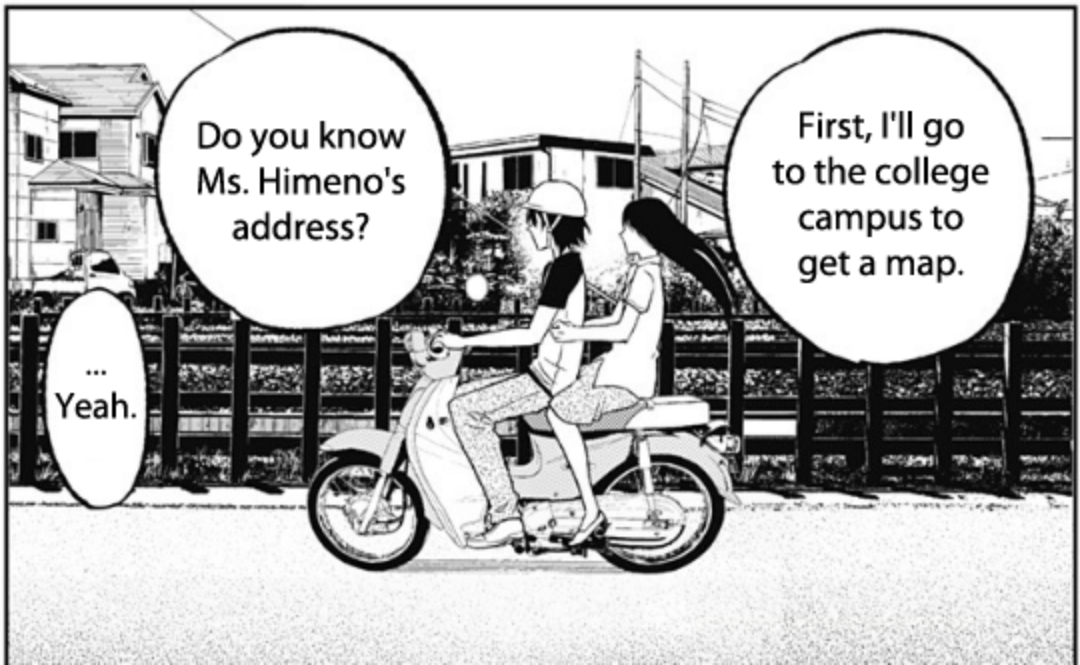

Or else what?
Your lifespan will be termi-nated.


Then we will be able to use it.
I guess it *can*.
...How-ever, this bike does seat two, does it not?

No way.
It won't bother me.
So long as you aren't vehemently opposed to me riding.


brrrrrm...
ガコン

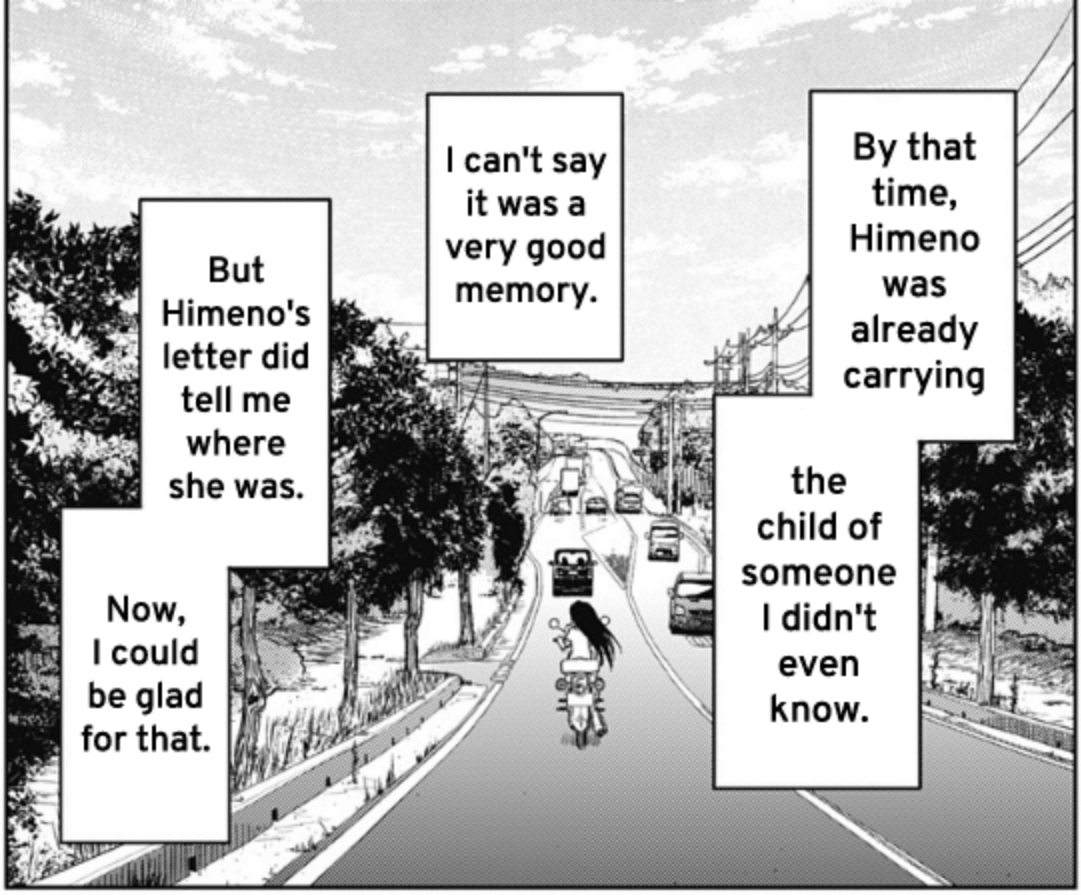

ブ
Pardon me.


Do you know Ms. Himeno's address?
First, I'll go to the college campus to get a map.
... Yeah.

I did get a letter from Himeno.
Just once,

I couldn't help but think that it didn't sound like Himeno at all....
No hint of sarcasm or an insulting word.
and other frivolous things.
She wrote about how she was busy with studies,
40

Never got a reply.
I ans- wered with a similarly banal letter.
But in the end,


But Himeno's letter did tell me where she was.
I can't say it was a very good memory.
By that time, Himeno was already carrying
the child of someone I didn't even know.
Now, I could be glad for that.

This isn't really a meaningful question,
but if you were in my situation,
how would you spend your last months?
...
Hey.
Hmm
...
I don't think I'd know until I was in that position.
Um, I know I told you before,
but you shouldn't talk to me in places like this.
glance
glance
?

I *am* a strange guy.
Let 'em.
They'll think you're a strange person who talks to himself.

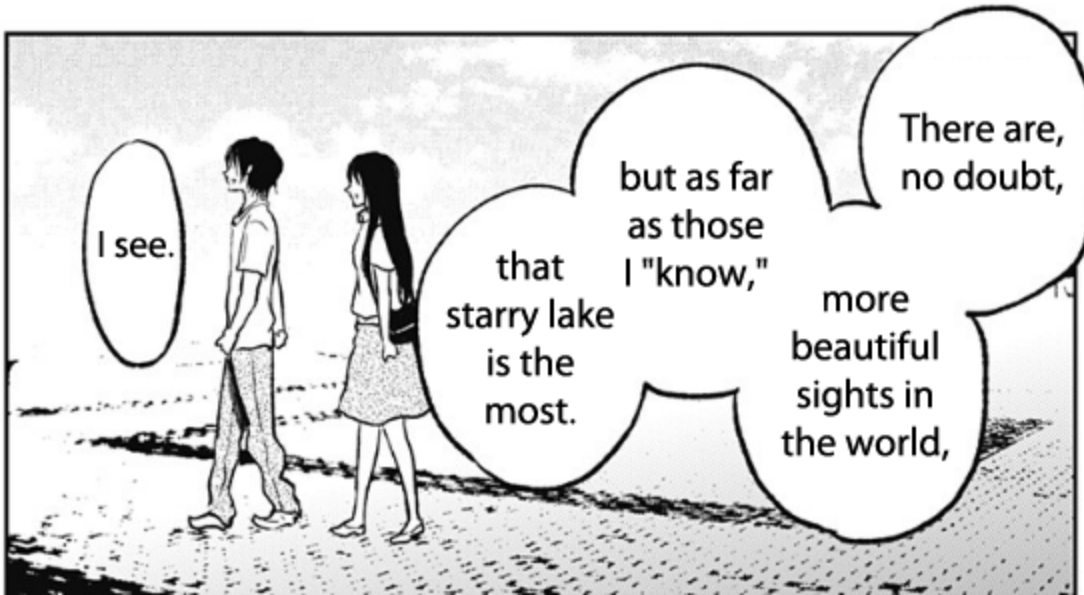
Better to remembered as a weirdo than not remembered at all.
In fact, I actively wanted to be weird.

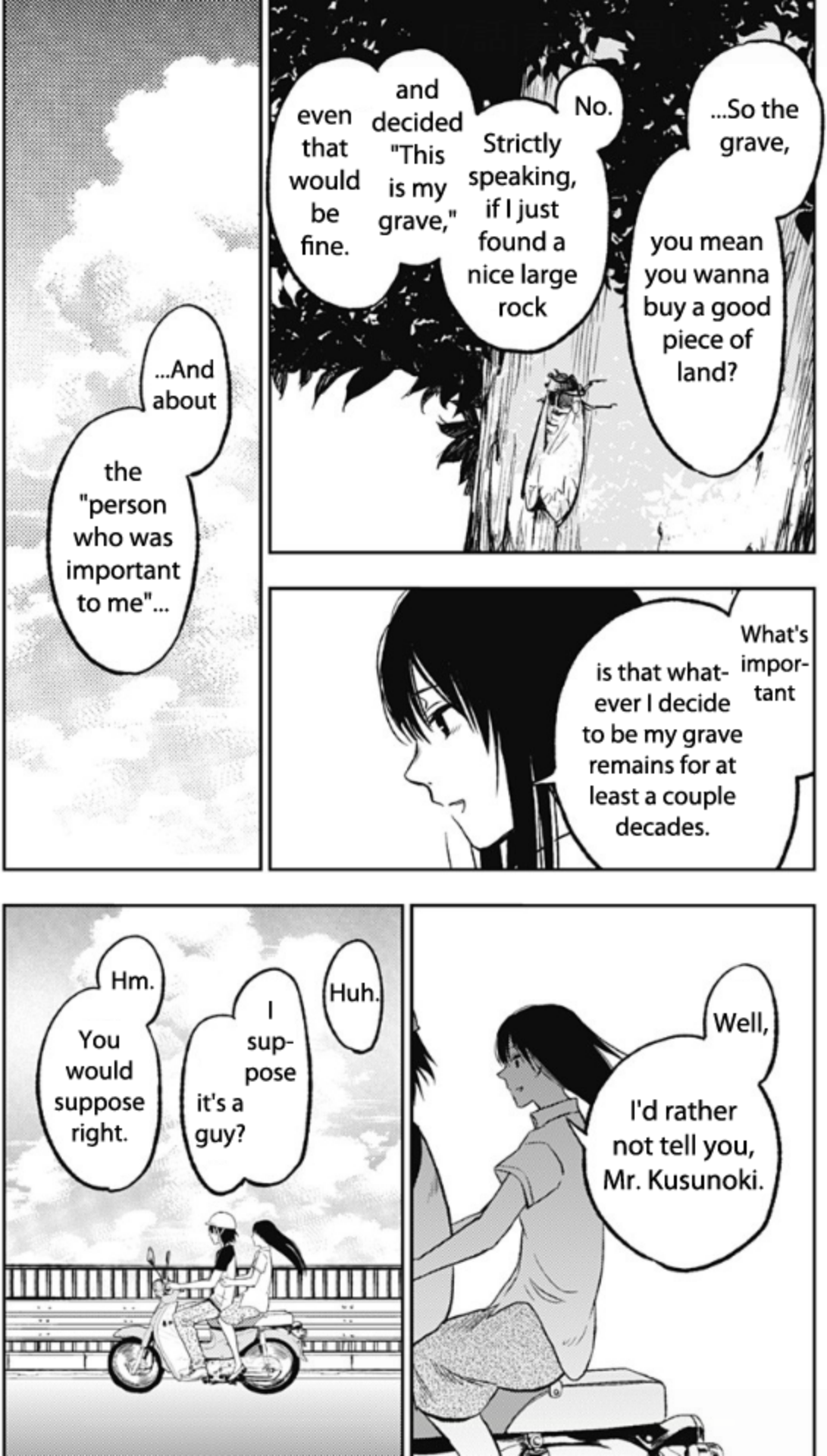
there are three things I would absolutely want to do.
If I myself had only a few months left to live,
About that question you asked.
I've been thinking.
...
Um.

... The first, to go to a certain lake.
The second, to make a grave for myself.
And the third: much like what you're doing, to go see a person who was important to me.
That's about all.

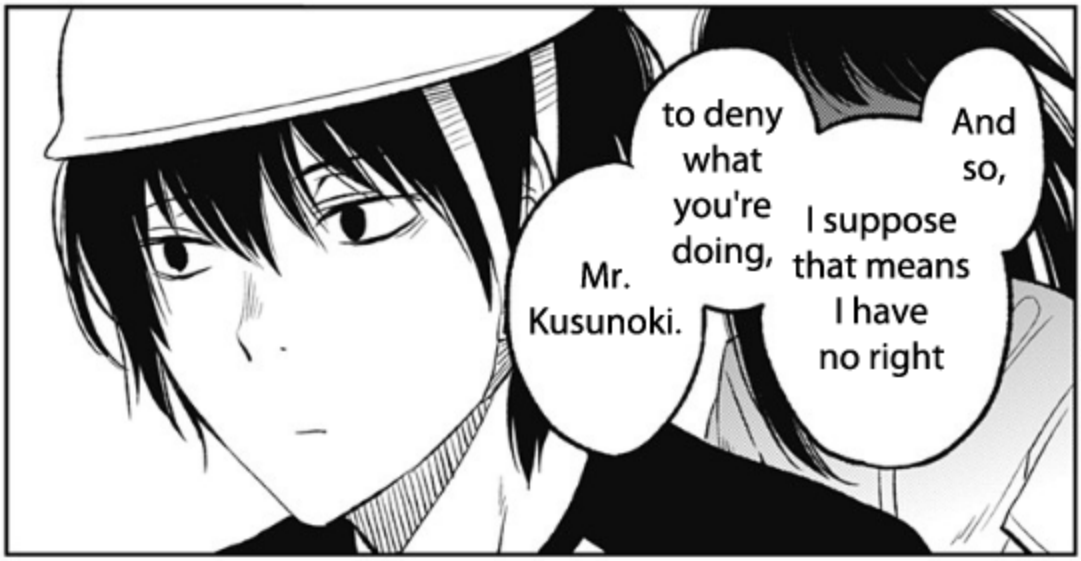
Not really sure I get it.
How about a little more info?

The lake is just a lake.
But I do recall, from my childhood, the view of the stars there being quite beautiful.


There are, no doubt, more beautiful sights in the world, but as far as those I "know," that starry lake is the most.
I see.


...So the grave,
you mean you wanna buy a good piece of land?
No.
Strictly speaking, if I just found a nice large rock
and decided "This is my grave,"
even that would be fine.
...And about
the "person who was important to me"...
What's important
is that whatever I decide to be my grave remains for at least a couple decades.
Well,
I'd rather not tell you, Mr. Kusunoki.
Huh.
I suppose it's a guy?
Hm.
You would suppose right.

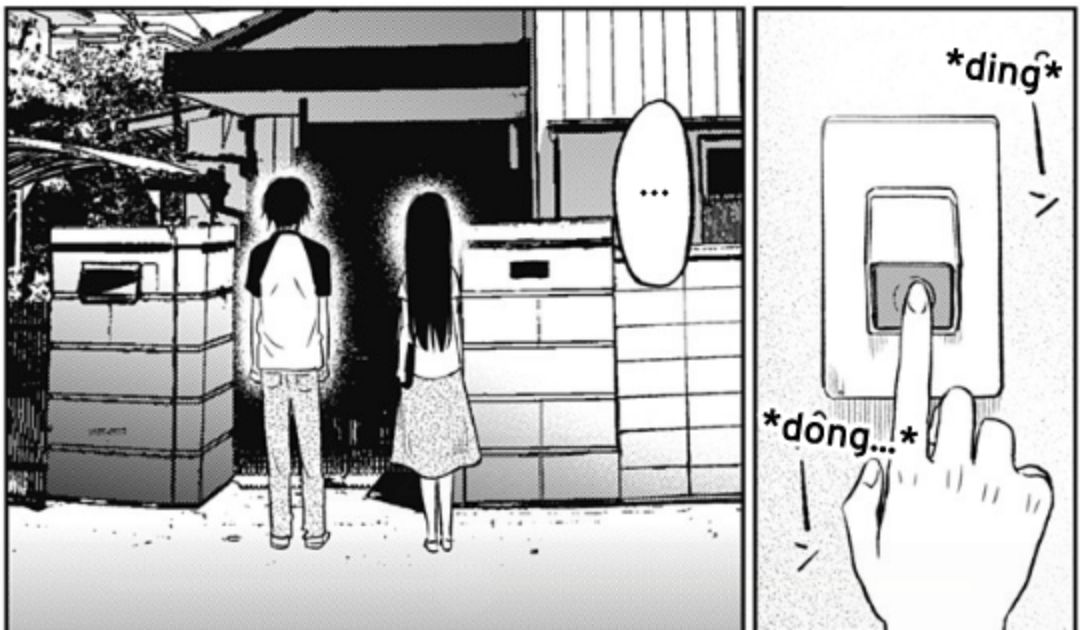
I too would still go to meet them, in the end.
I think, as much as it might hurt me, as much as I might be dis-appointed,


to deny what you're doing, Mr. Kusunoki.
And so, I suppose that means I have no right

Well, I don't know anything about my own future.
Talk about out of char-acter. A lot more timid when it's about you, huh?

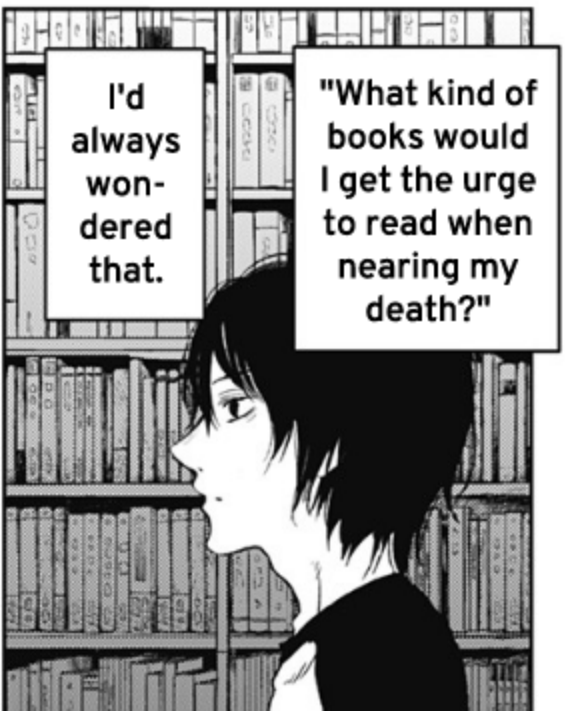
Himeno

There aren't any other "Himeno" houses around.
Guess this must be the one.


...
ding
dông...

Maybe somebody'll come home at night.
Let's waste some time.

"what kind of book could possibly be useful right before death?"
To put it another way,


I'd always wondered that.
"What kind of books would I get the urge to read when nearing my death?"

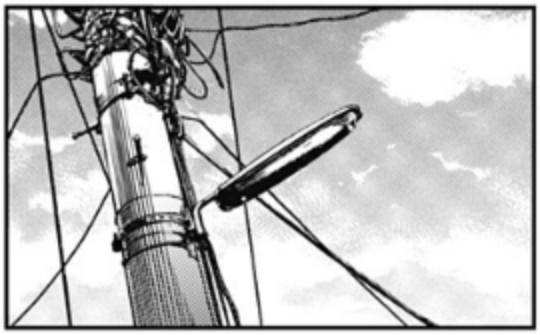
As it turns out, I chose...
some not partic-ularly interesting picks.
scoot
Wanting to try observing and reading at the same time?
Some-thing like that.

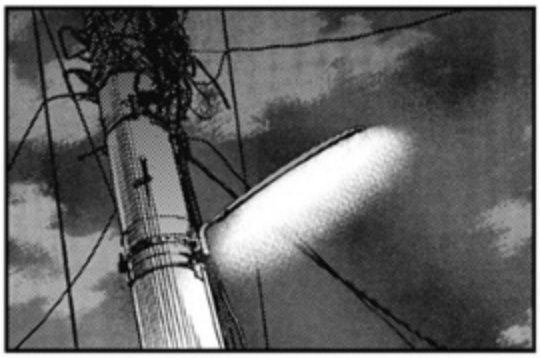
Read-ing like this, I wasn't just thinking about how I felt, but also how Miyagi felt reading the same part. Having that aware-ness seemed to make for more enriching reading.

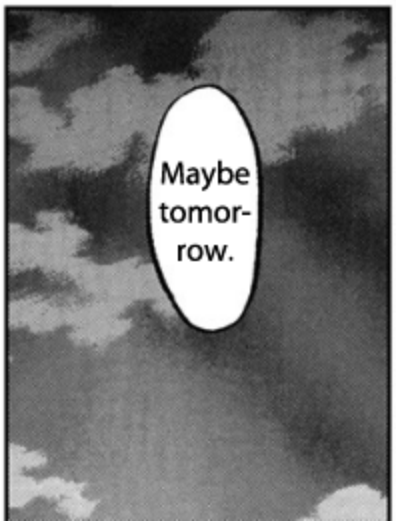
She sure does have a calming smell to her,

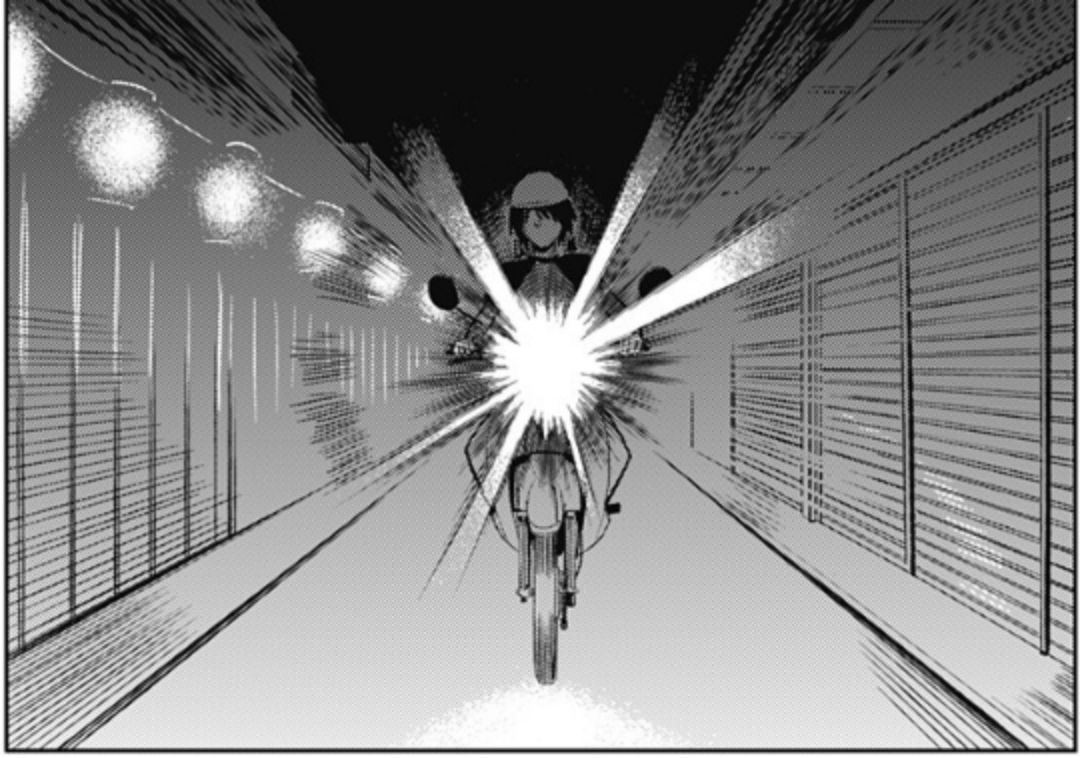
I thought.

Still nobody home...

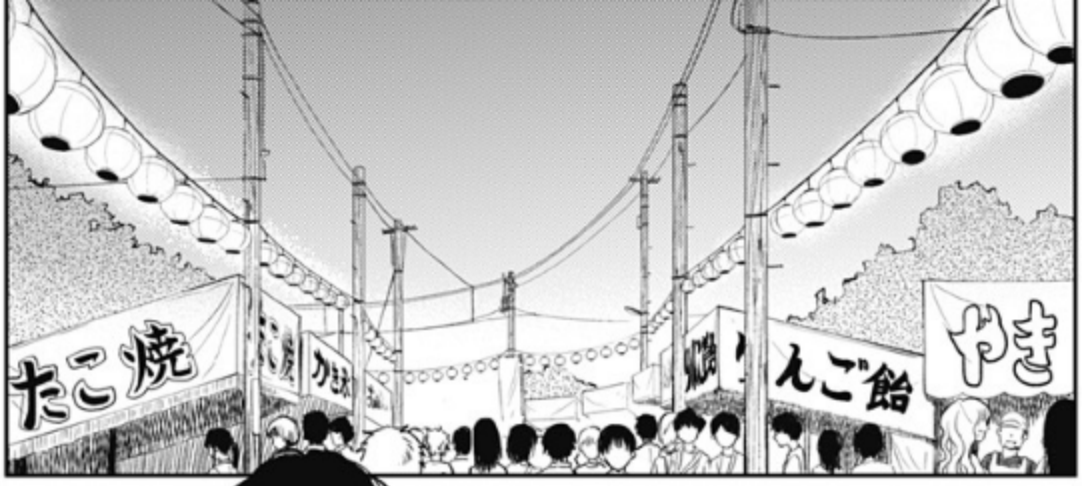





Maybe tomor-row.

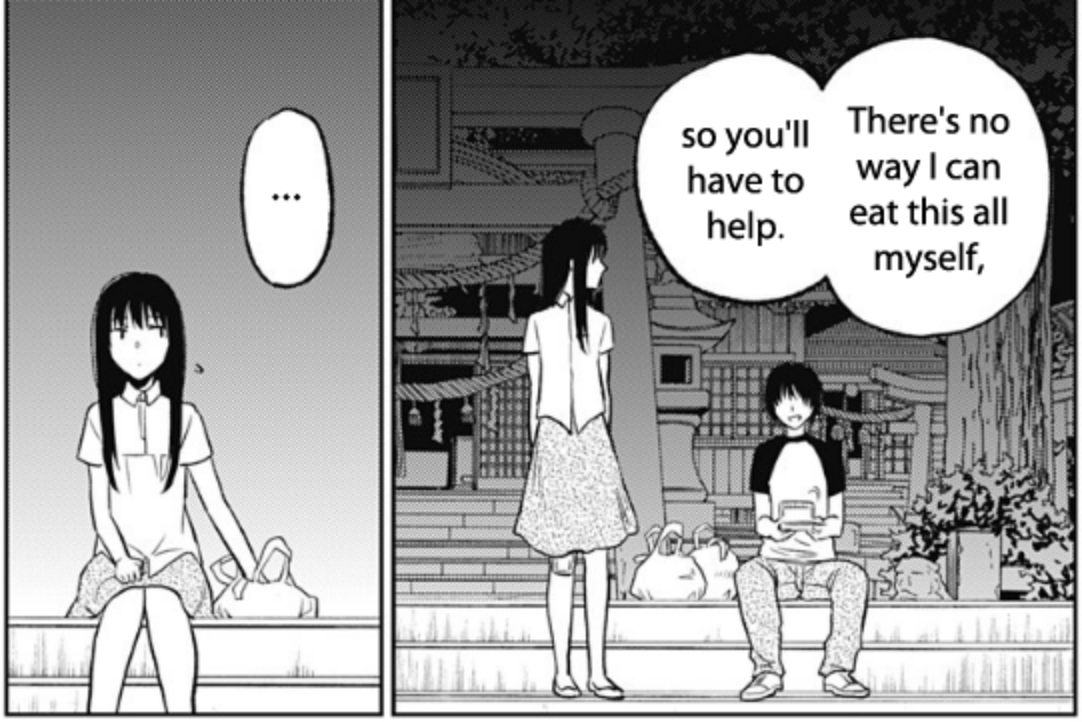


Are you going ... to a festi-val?
The shrine past it.
Want to drop by?


たこ焼
やき

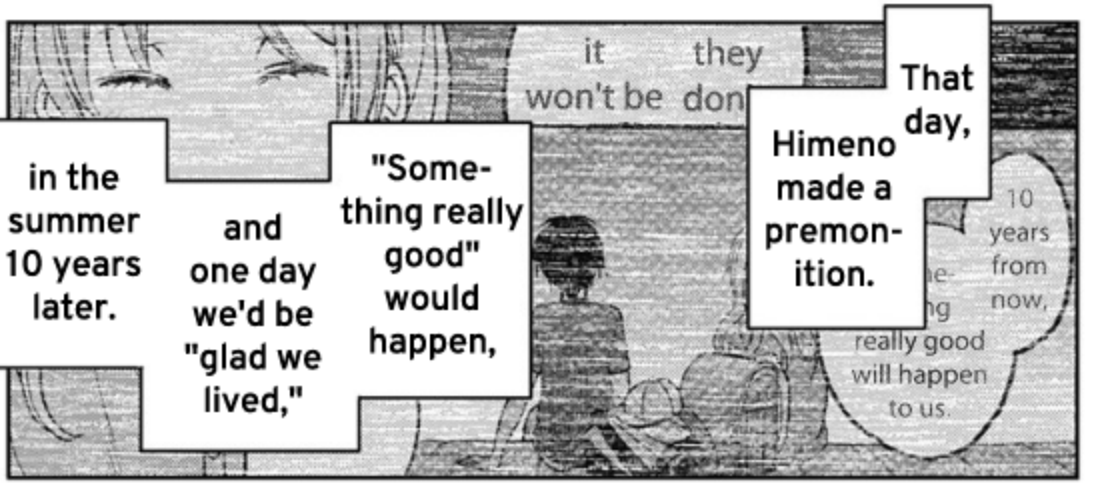
I hadn't seen such a festival in ten years.

Ever since Himeno left,
I'd stopped going to the local one.
焼
What are you buying all that for?
Dunno.
I couldn't tell you myself.


...
There's no way I can eat this all myself,
so you'll have to help.

I'll indulge.

Guess going for a full tour was too much.
urp...
Ahh...



That day, Himeno made a premonition.

"Something really good" would happen,

and one day we'd be "glad we lived,"

in the summer 10 years later.

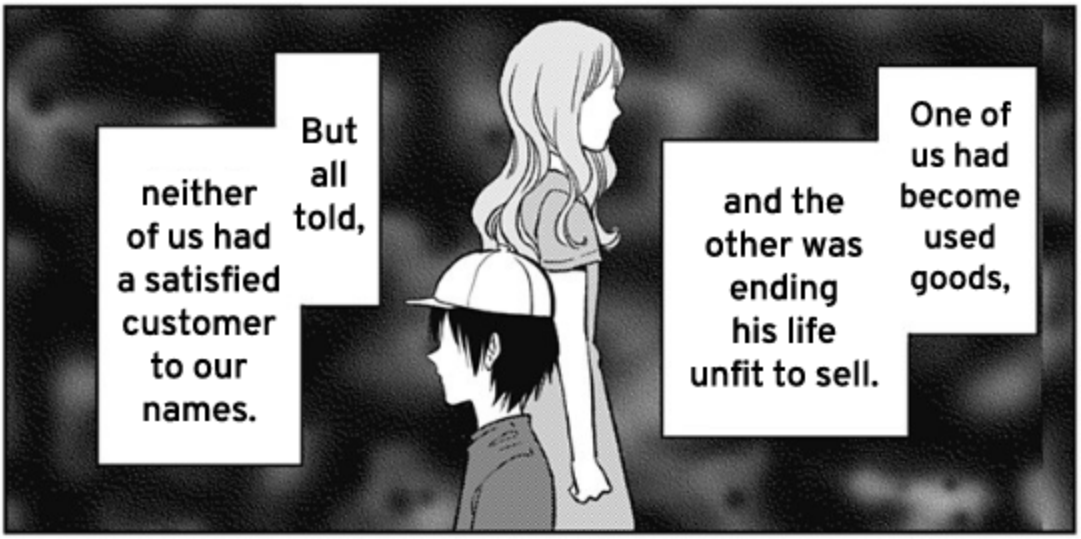
Furthermore, she said that

if we both hadn't found someone to marry after ten years,

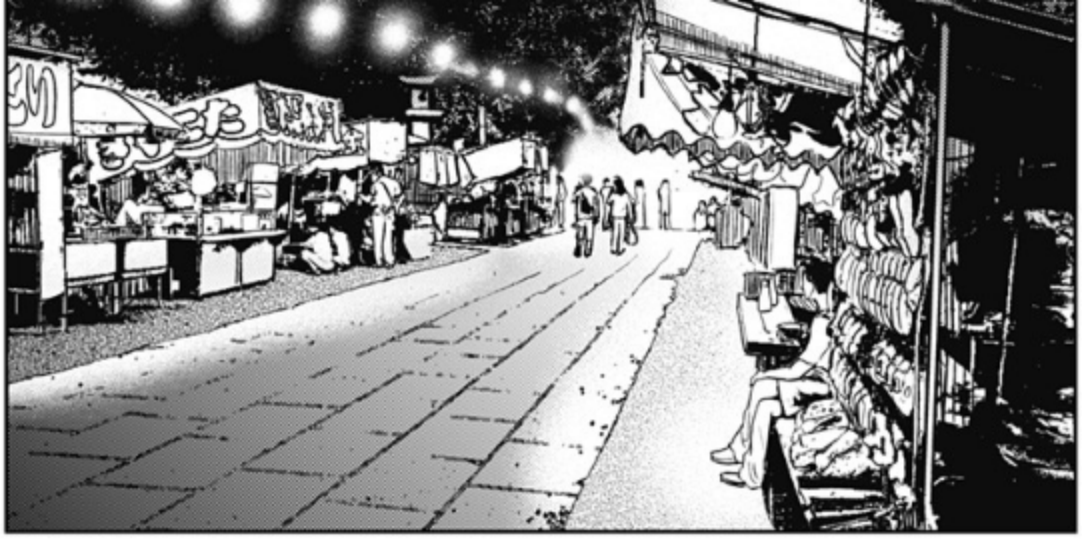
being that we were both "on the shelf,"

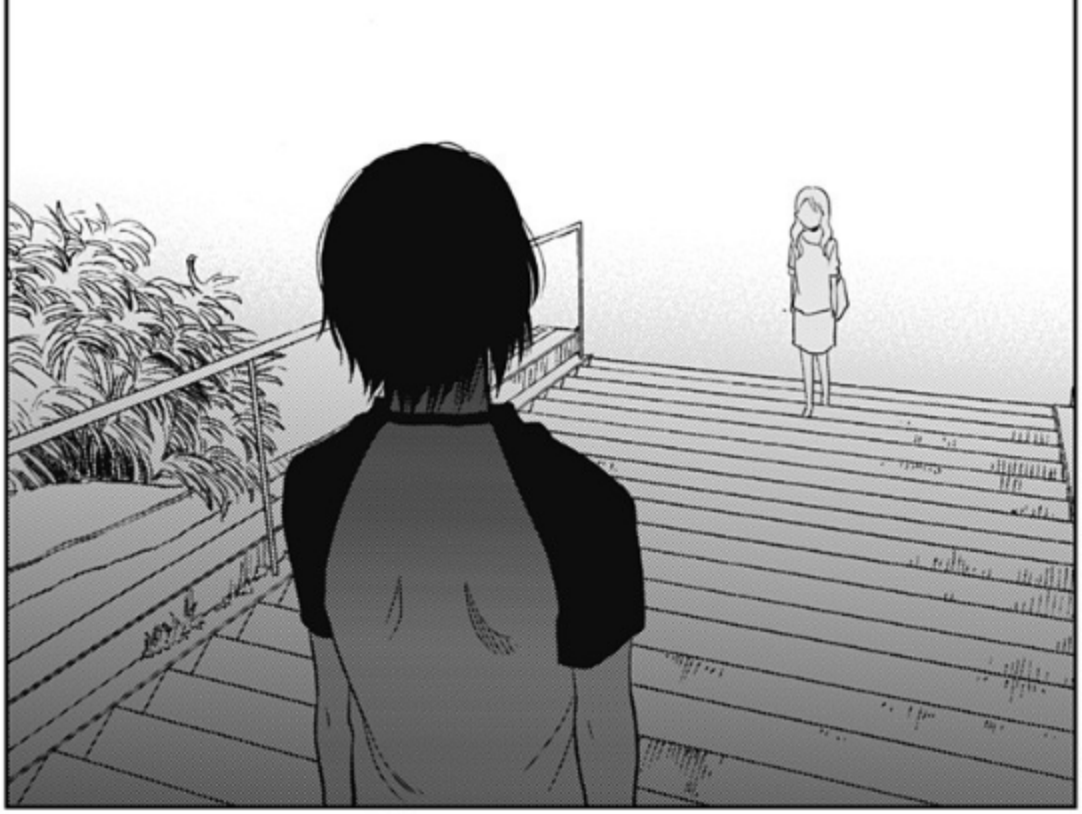
we should marry each other.

I was in that summer.
Well, right now,

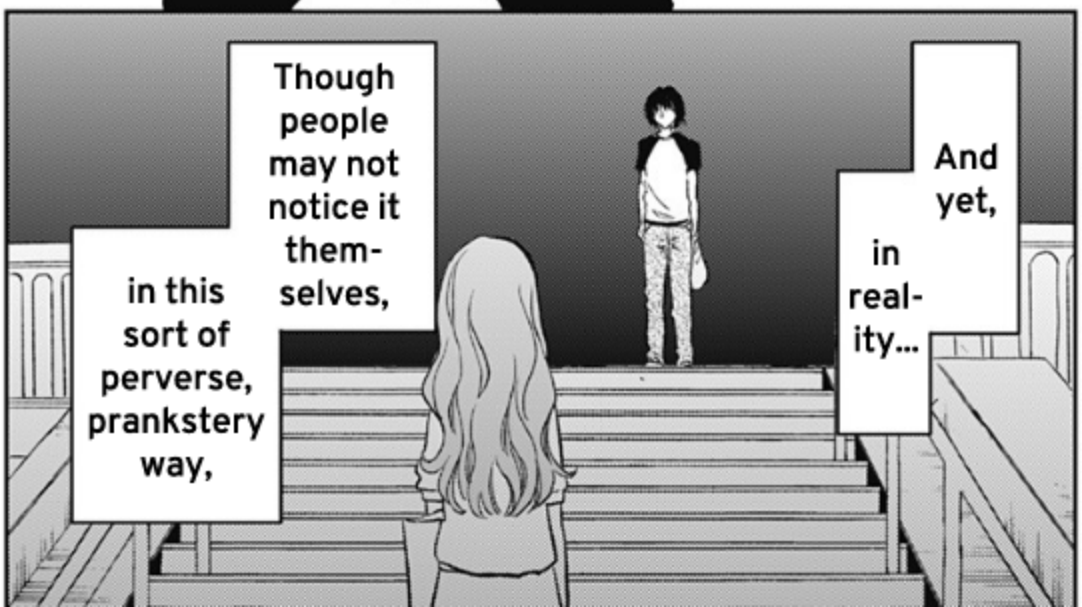

But all told,
neither of us had a satisfied customer to our names.
One of us had become used goods,
and the other was ending his life unfit to sell.

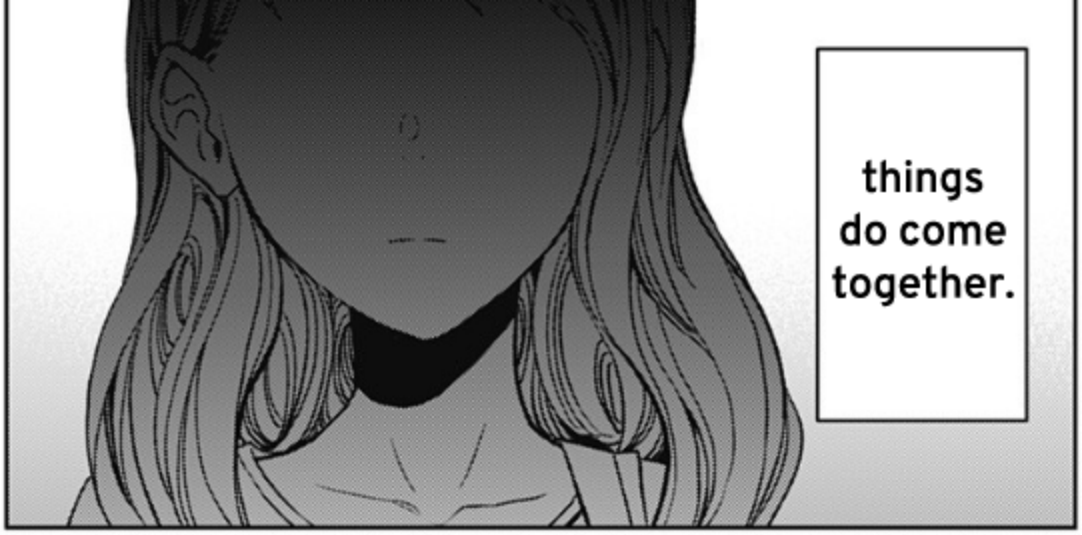
Where was Himeno now,
and what was she doing, I wonder?





Some things are too good to be true.
So people say.


Though people may not notice it themselves,
in this sort of perverse, prankstery way,
And yet,
in reality...

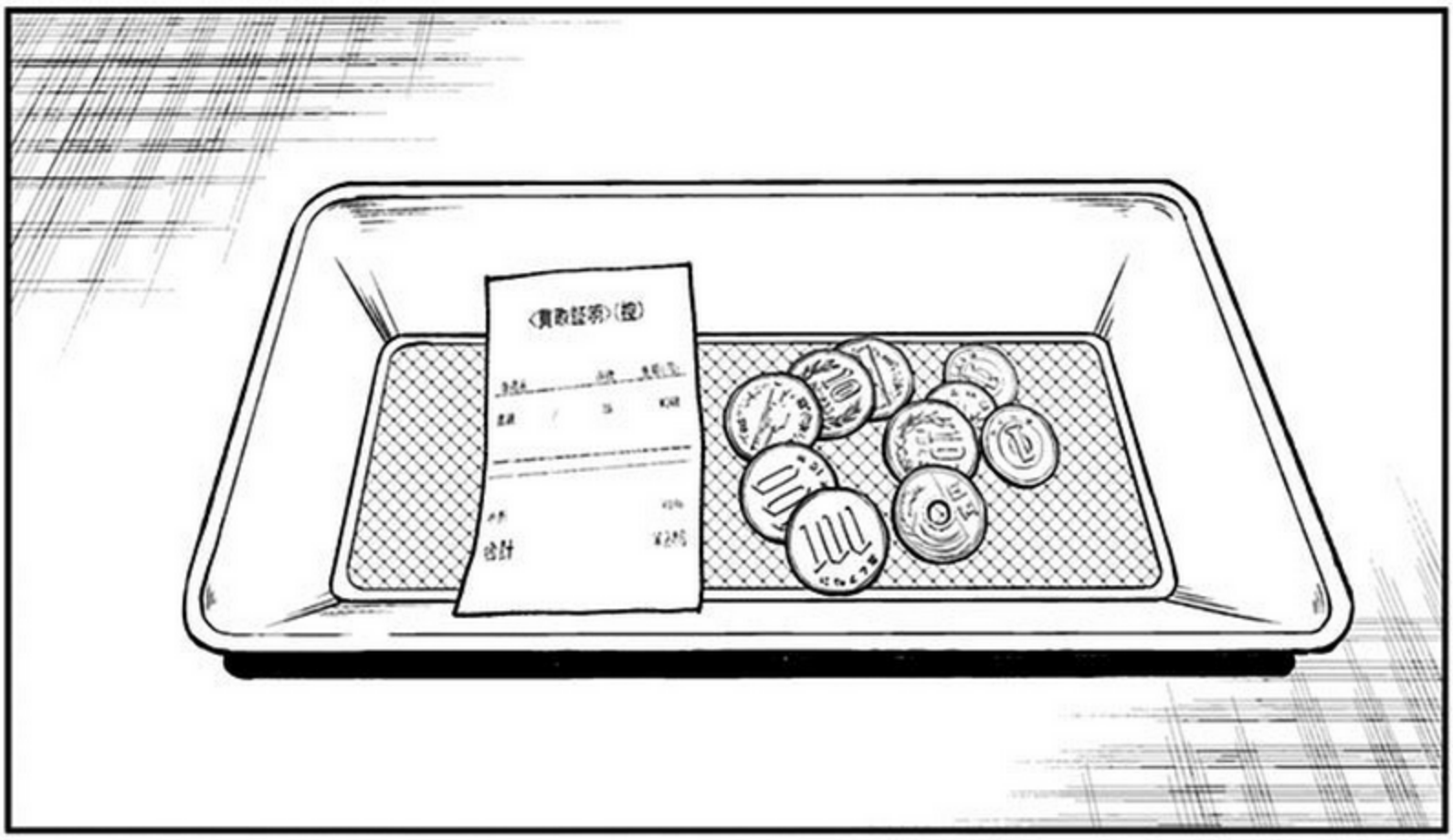

things
do come
together.

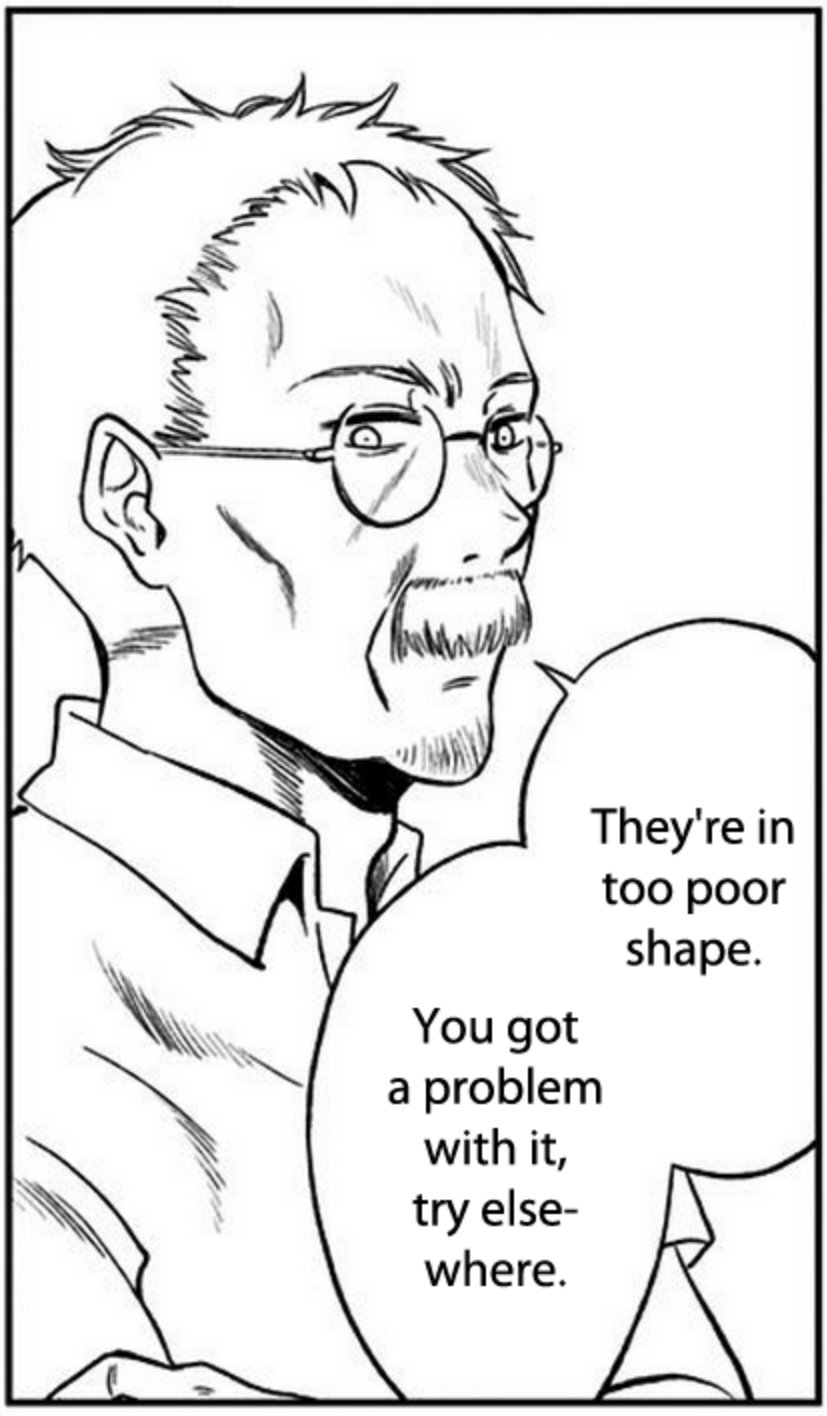
...

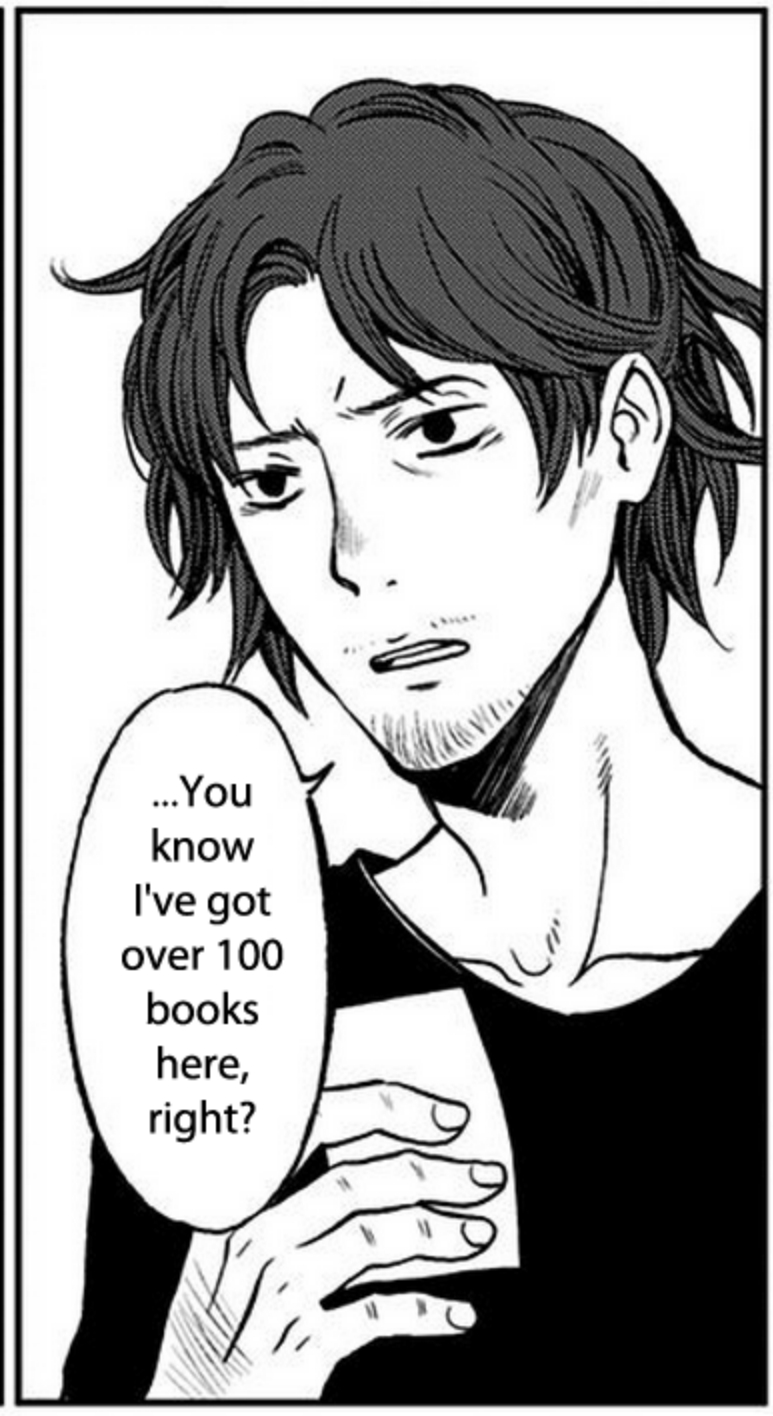
Himeno.

...Kusu-
noki?

Extra Chapter
The Unspoken Lightness of Being


〈買取証明〉(控)
合計


They're in too poor shape.
You got a problem with it, try else-where.


...You know I've got over 100 books here, right?

Let's have ice cream together!

tug
tug

Good plan.
Ehehe.

Yeah,
and you're no help.

You're strapped for cash, eh?

Hey.

Well then,
you wanna sell your lifespan?

Life-span?

...

Hmph.

The hell are you talkin' about?

Yeah, life-span.

Even just a year or two could fetch a decent price.

Are you askin' me to try some kinda clinical trial?

'Cause if you are, I'd be happy to oblige right now.

No, I'm asking you a question:

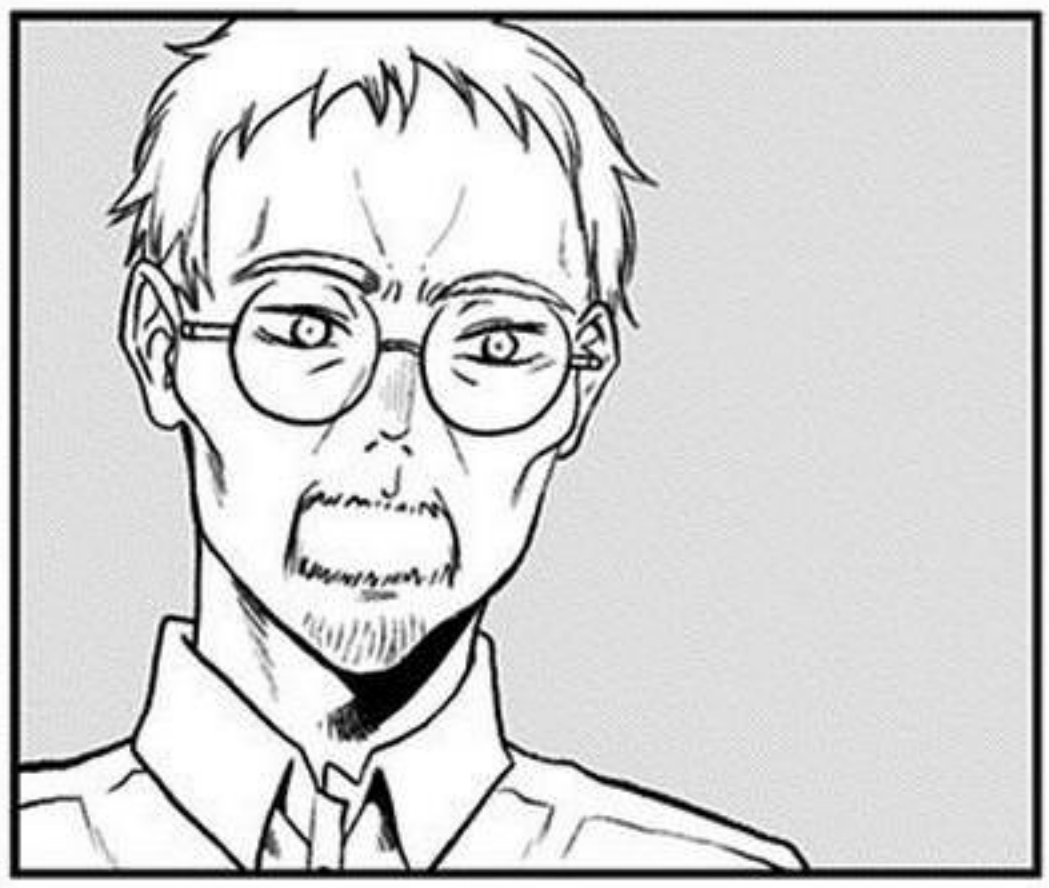
do you wanna sell your lifespan?

I don't get you.

Sell my life-span?

What's that even mean?

Explain it in a way I can under-stand.



It may not be easy to believe,

but there's a facility nearby

which can evaluate lifespan, and buys it in years.

How about that?

Dream come true, right?

If the remainder of your life proves to be of value,

then just a few years of it

would let you live out the rest comfort-ably.

Yeah, sounds like a dream, alright.

...But,

unfortunately, my life's pretty much worthless.

Just like most of these books I brought,

it'd just go for the lowest price.

The lowest price, eh...

Say, out of curiosity...

What do you think the minimum value is for one year of lifespan?

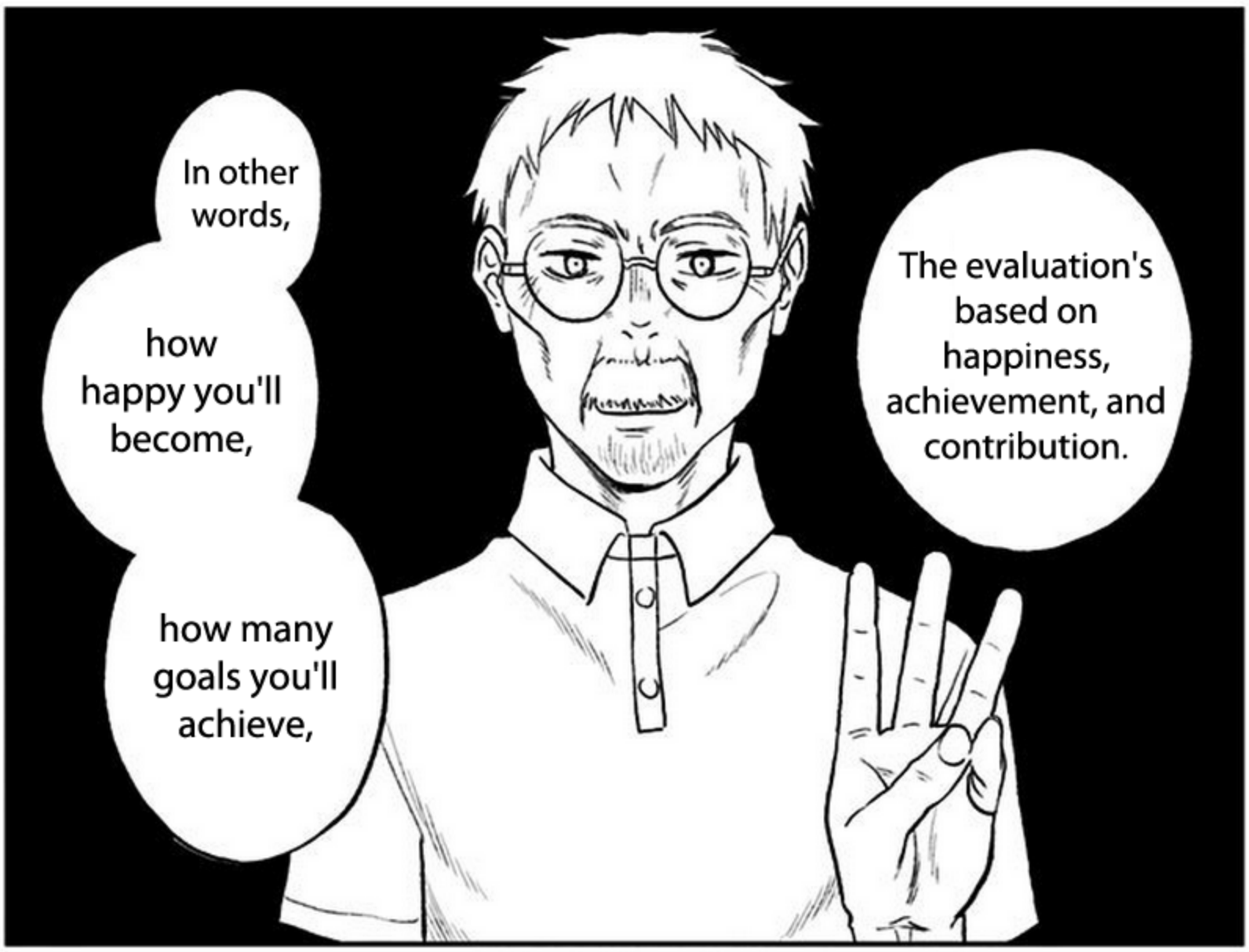
Take a guess.

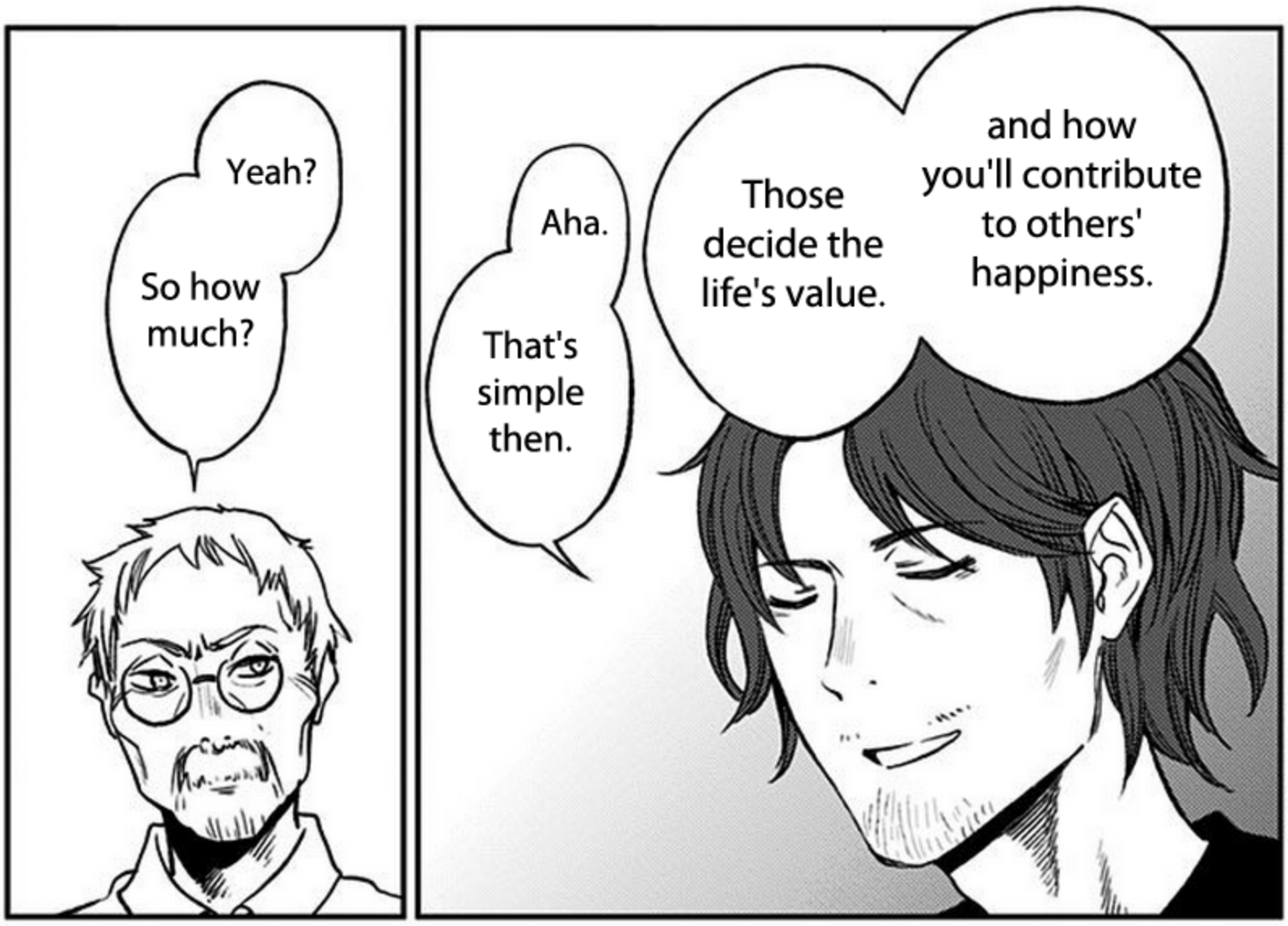
If your answer's close enough, I'll buy all these books for 100 yen each.

...

Okay, sure, but I dunno how I'm supposed to know.

I'll give you a hint.


In other words,
how happy you'll become,
how many goals you'll achieve,
The evaluation's based on happiness, achievement, and contribution.


Yeah?
So how much?
Aha.
That's simple then.
Those decide the life's value.
and how you'll contribute to others' happiness.

Not worthy of a price.

Zero.

ガタッ
rattle

…

How'd you figure it was zero?

swoop

Right, basically...

Let's try rephrasing your question.

...

Well, how should I say this?

simply put...

can't realize a single dream -

If you can't make yourself happy,

can't make others happy,

...Go on.

if you're *someone like me,*

how would that life be priced?

Comes to the same thing, right?

I thought back through these 32 years of life,

and I've never felt any happiness that felt like happiness.

Had a bunch of dreams,

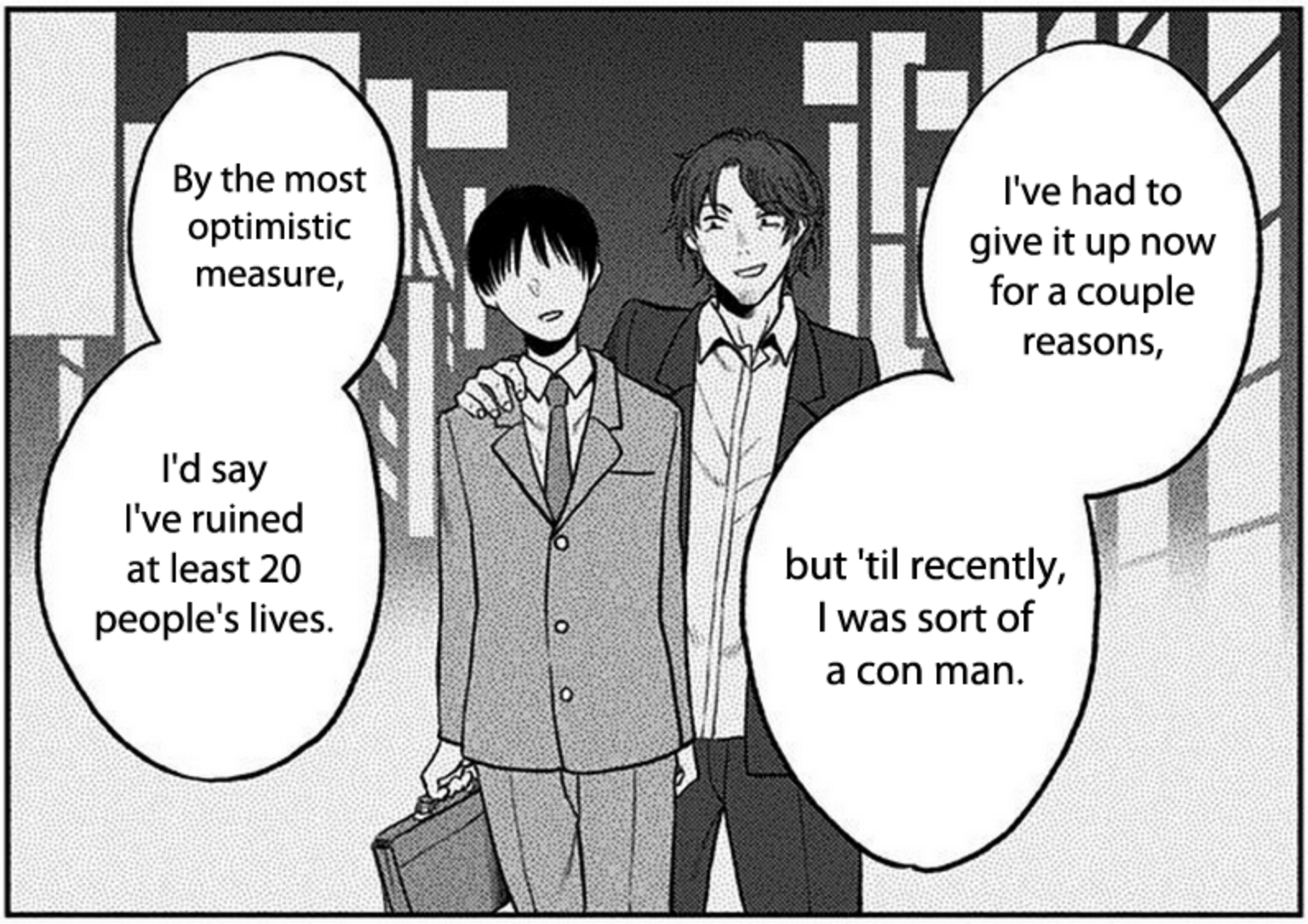
but never achieved a single one.

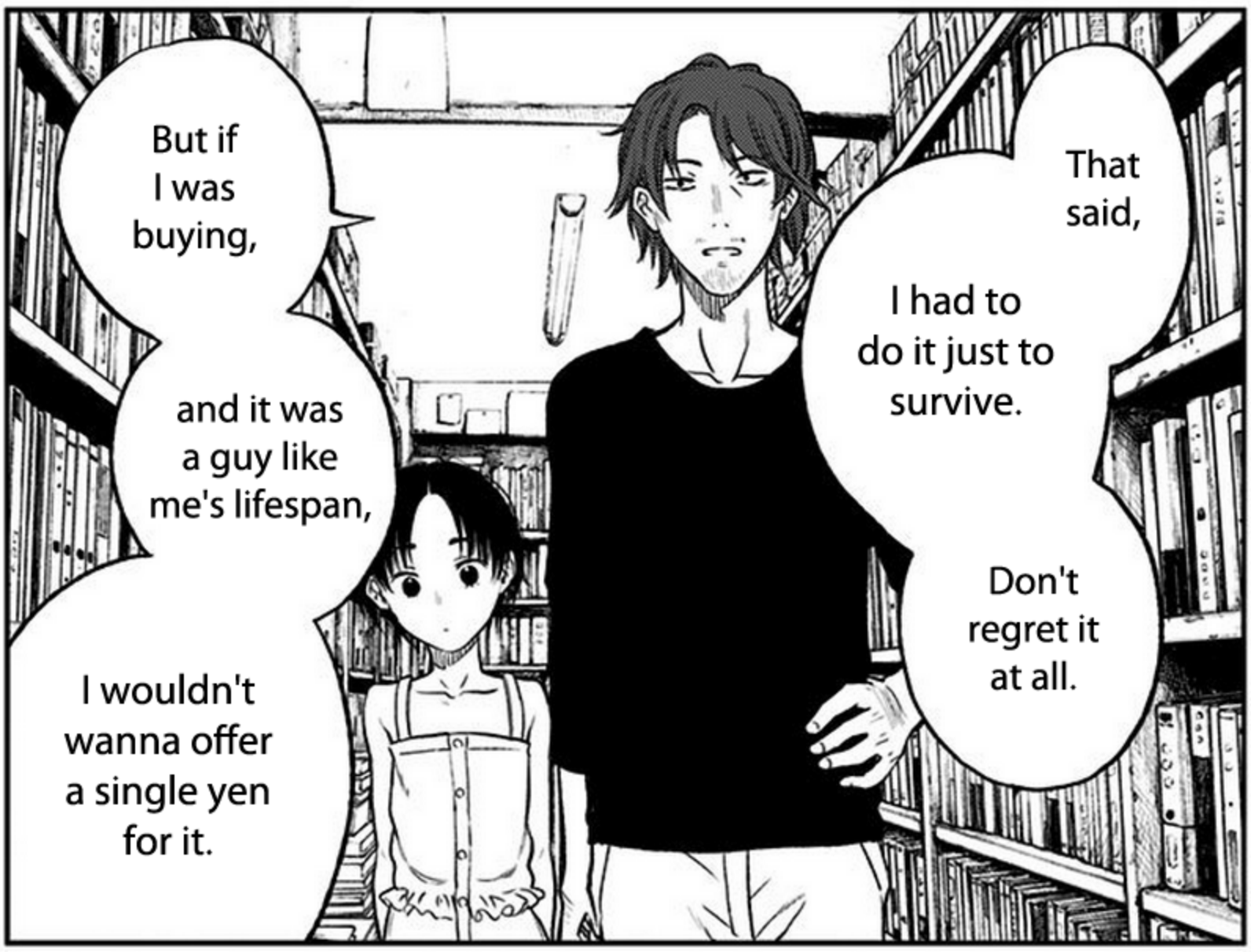
And forget ever making other people happy -

I actively stole their happiness away.

Stole?

Yeah.


By the most optimistic measure,
I'd say I've ruined at least 20 people's lives.
I've had to give it up now for a couple reasons,
but 'til recently, I was sort of a con man.


But if I was buying,
and it was a guy like me's lifespan,
I wouldn't wanna offer a single yen for it.
That said,
I had to do it just to survive.
Don't regret it at all.

...
... I see.

Do you wanna sell your lifespan?

Well, I'll ask you again now.

Who out there would sell something for nothin'?

Gramps, were you even listening to a word I said?

I'm sure you could live comfortably on that money.

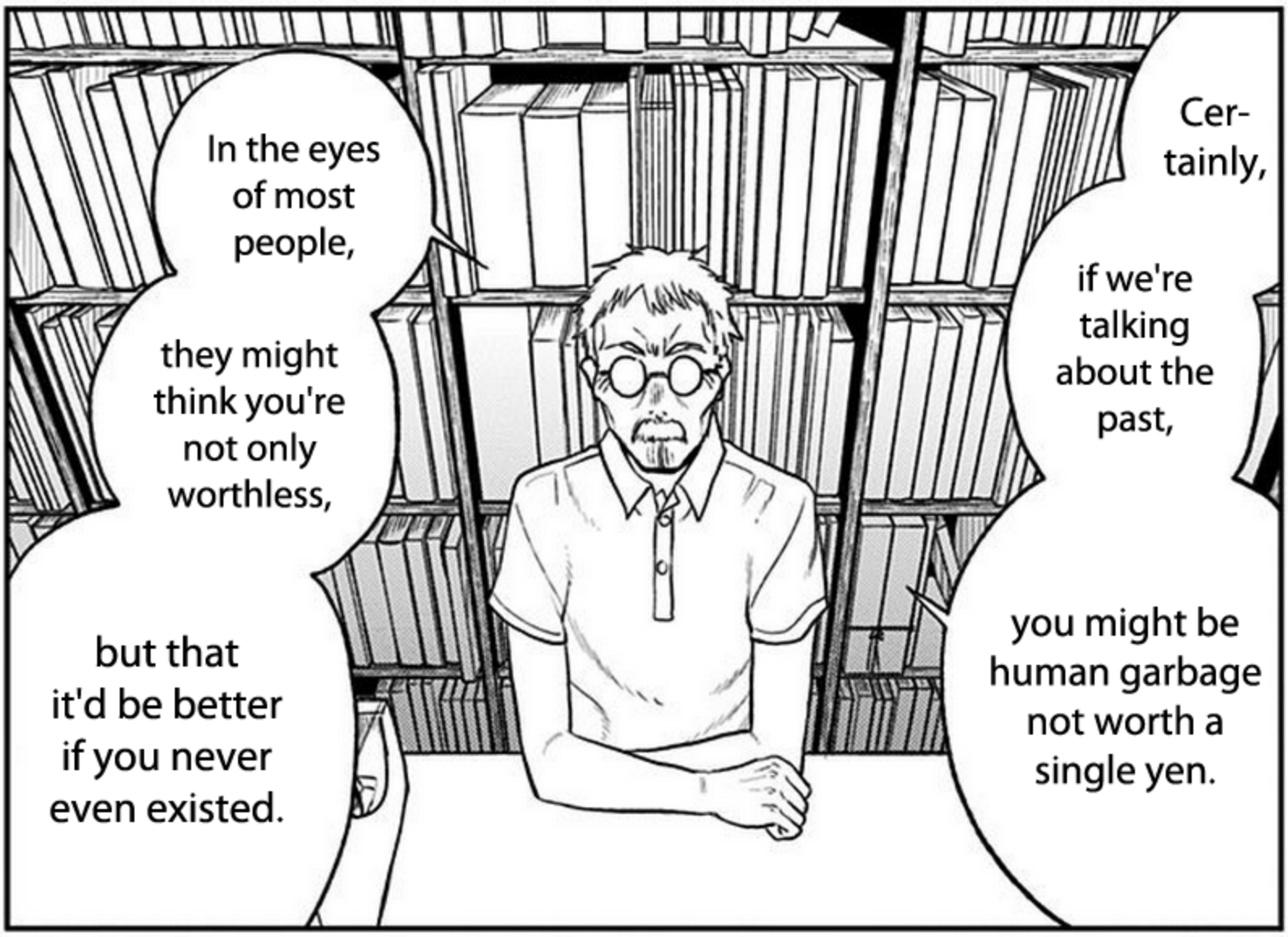
Just selling five years or so,

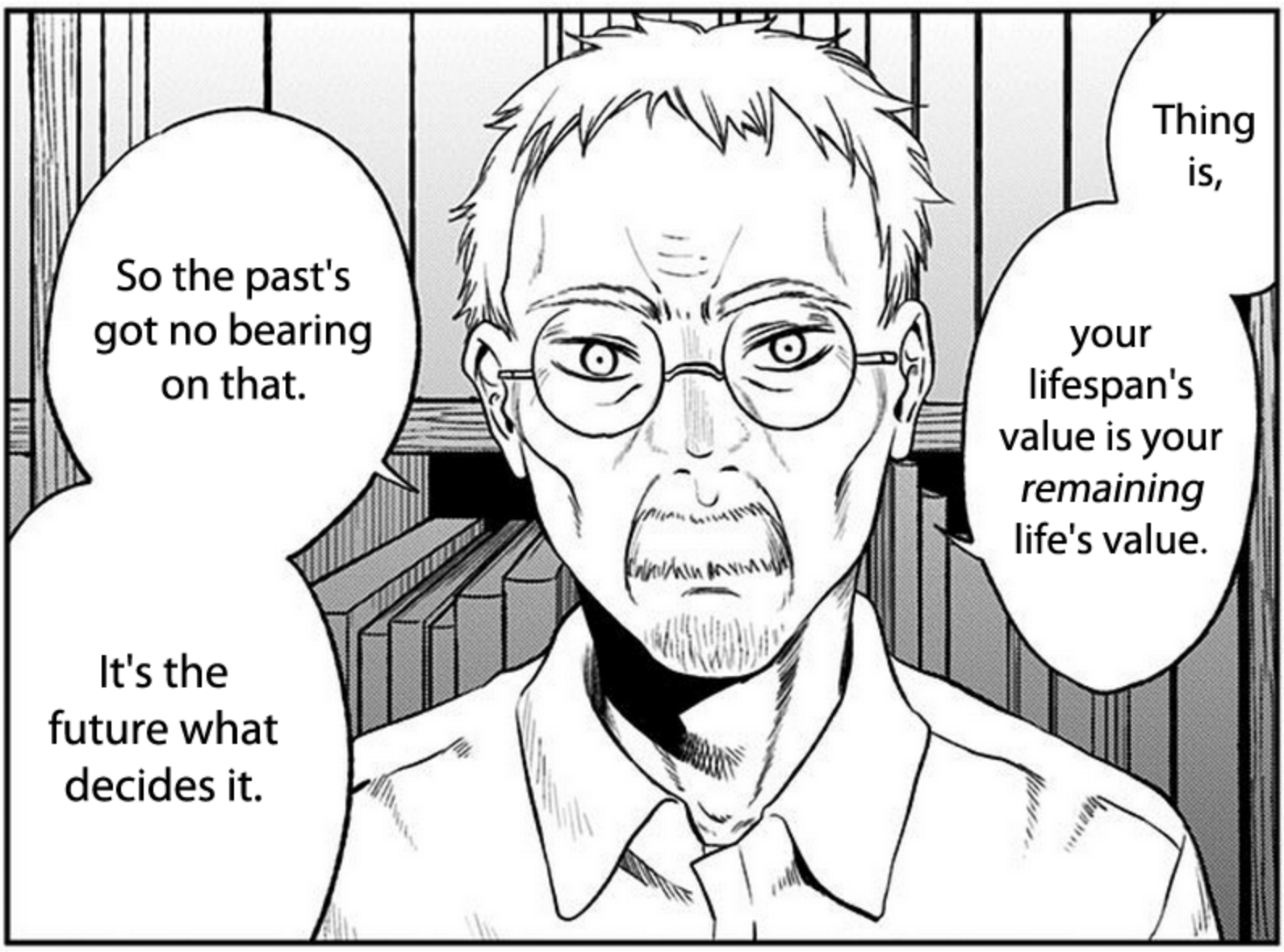
Oh yeah? On what basis are you so sure?

sigh

As far as I can see,

I think your lifespan'd sell pretty well.


In the eyes of most people,
they might think you're not only worthless,
but that it'd be better if you never even existed.
Cer-tainly,
if we're talking about the past,
you might be human garbage not worth a single yen.


So the past's got no bearing on that.
It's the future what decides it.
Thing is,
your lifespan's value is your *remaining* life's value.

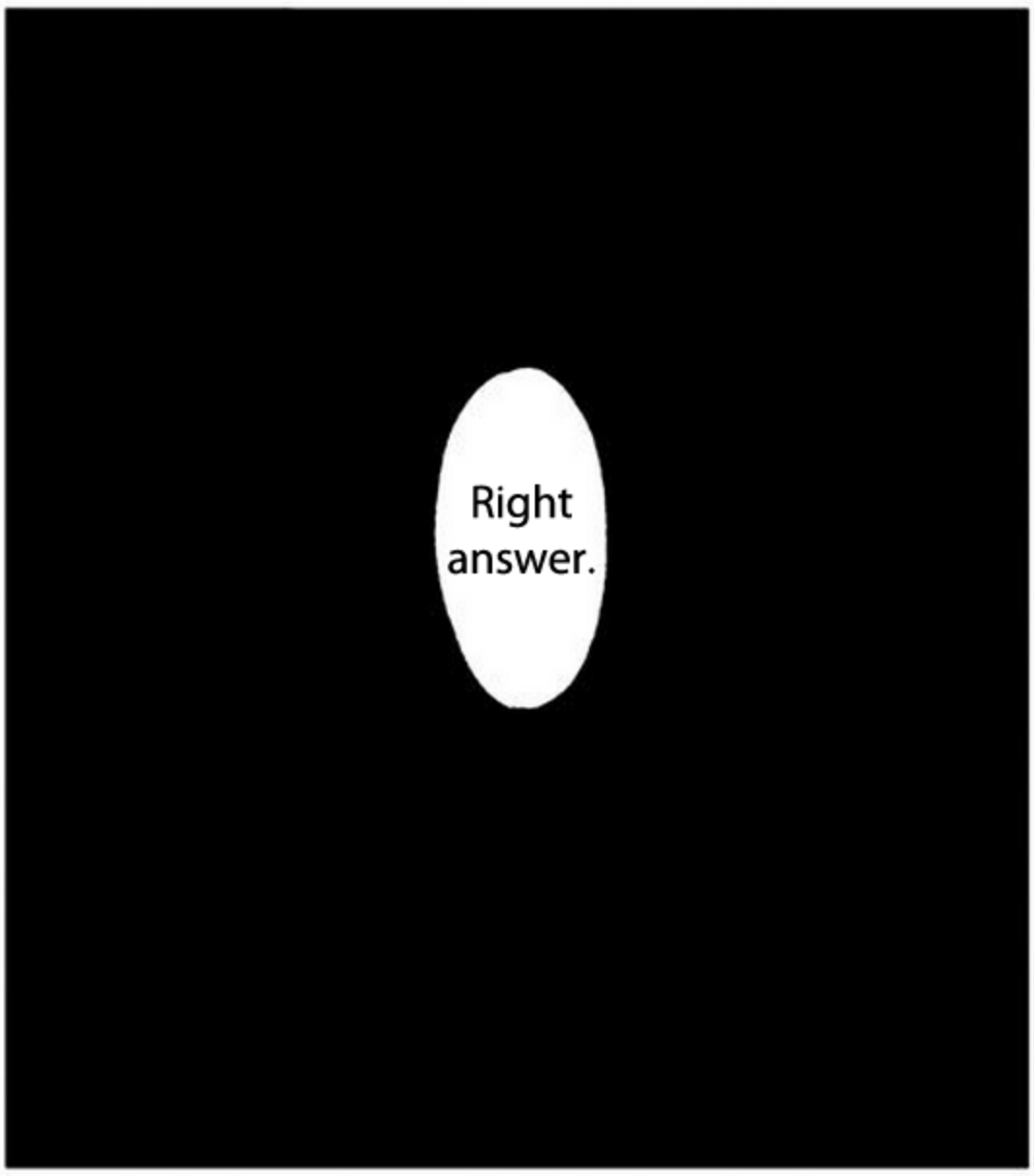
Do you see me as having a bright future ahead?

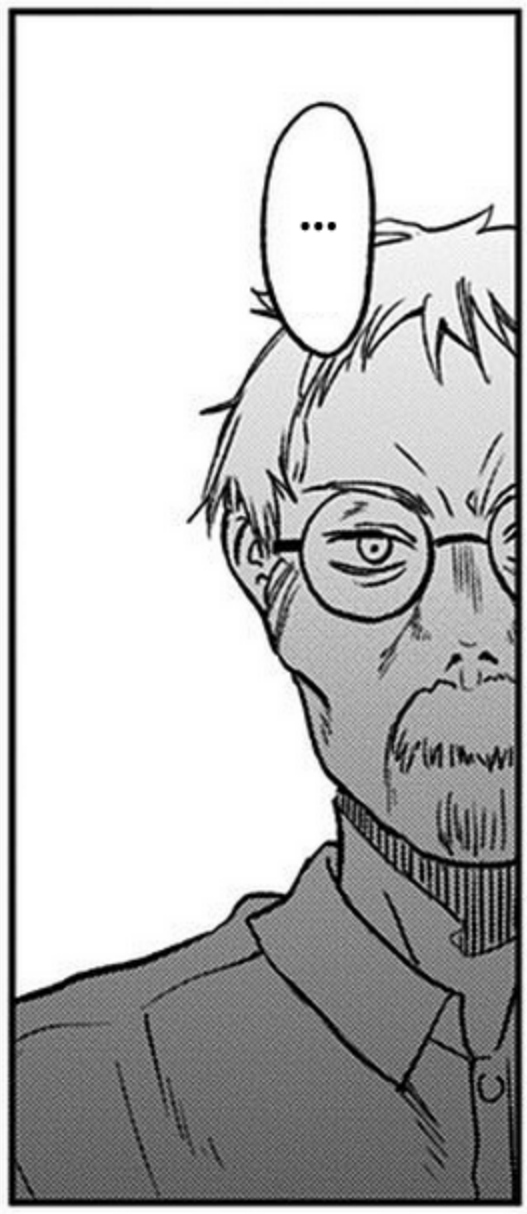
But still, gramps ...

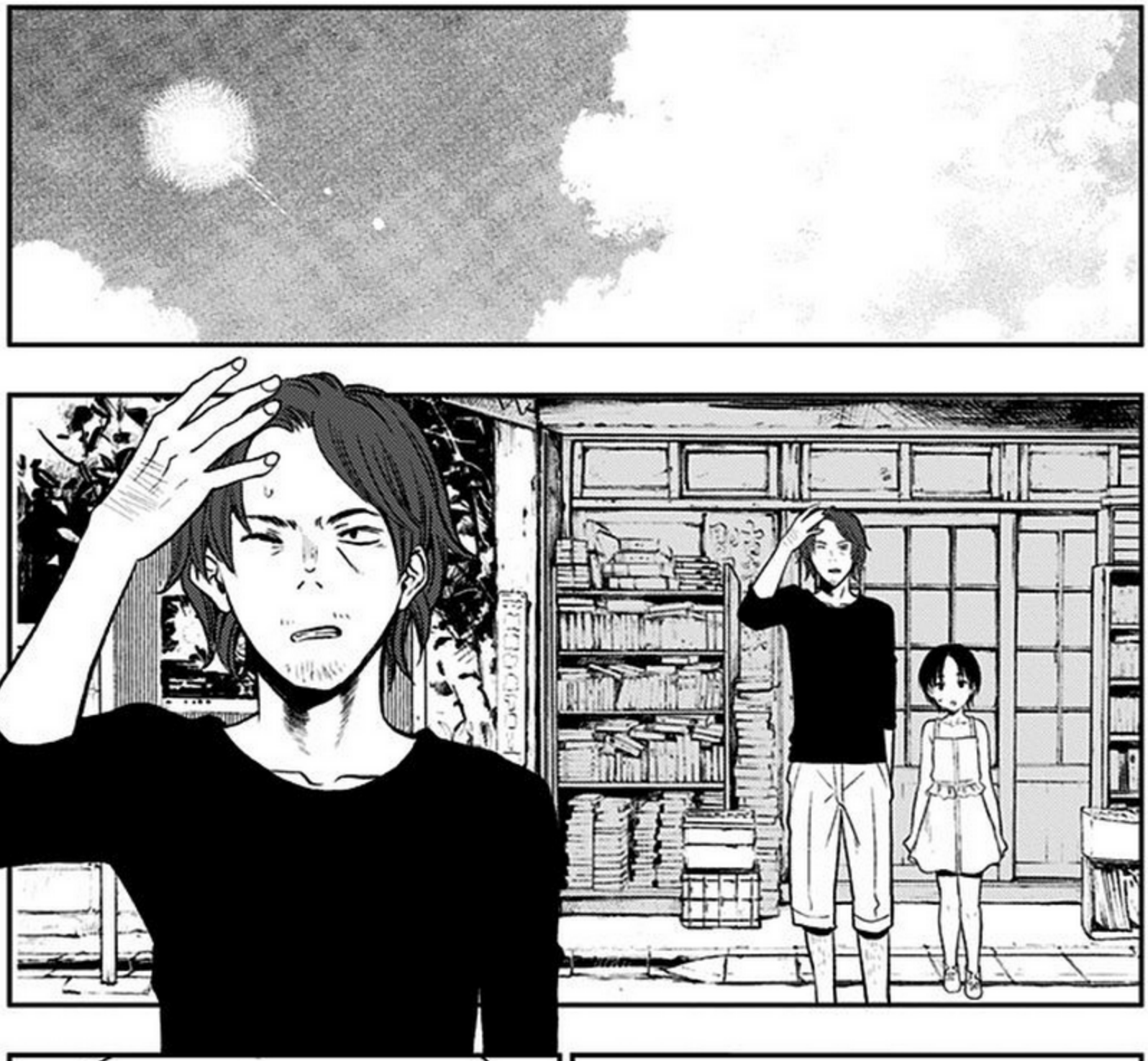
Okay, I get how the past doesn't affect the value of lifespan.

... Yeah.

No logic in letting those years go
if they're worth that much.
all the more reason not to sell.
Well,

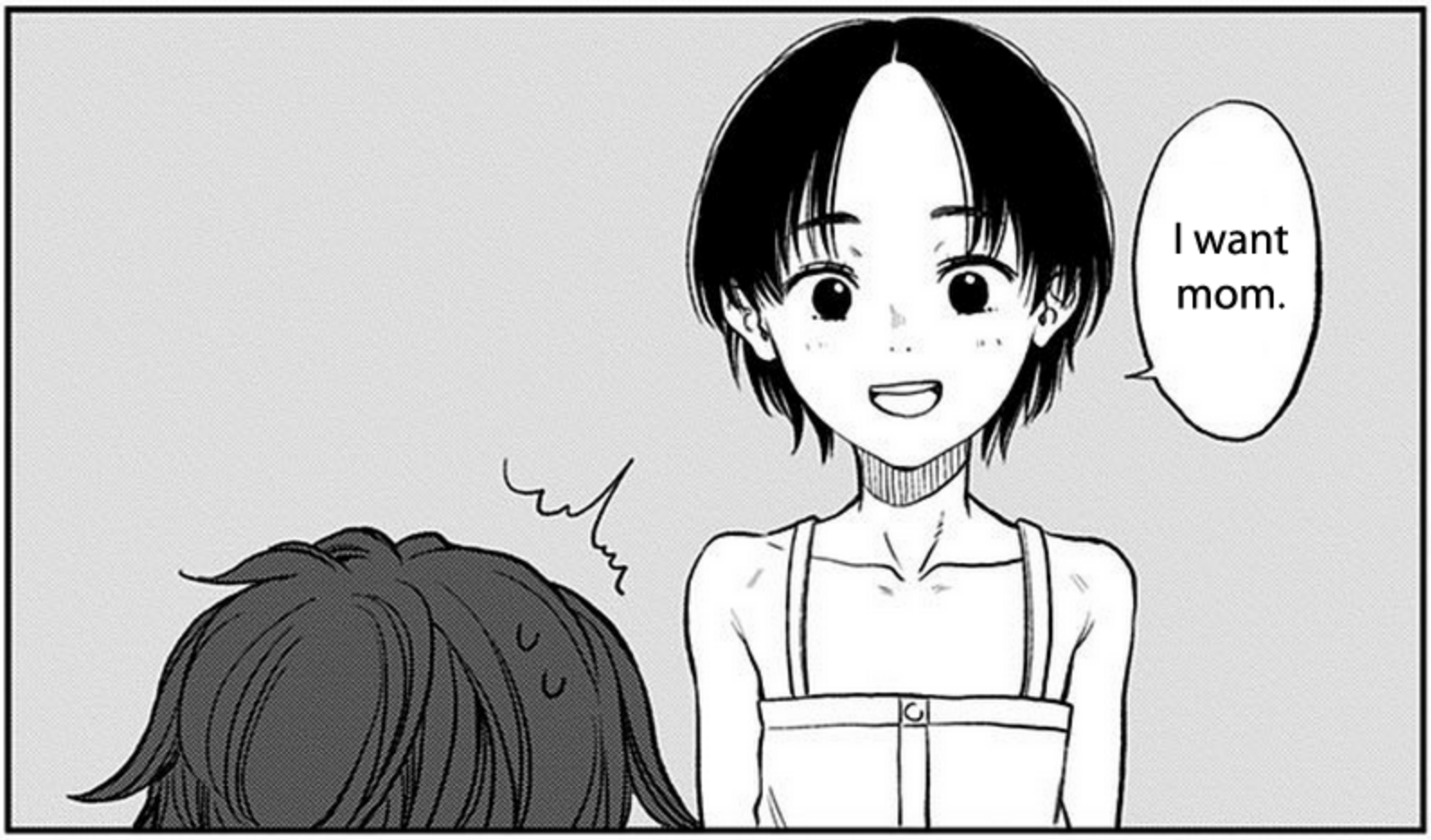

Right answer.


...



Anything you want 'sides ice cream?
Ask now, and I'll buy you anything.

got some unexpected temporary income.
Okay,


I want mom.

I was just kidding!
And within 10,000 yen...
But I'd appreciate something purchasable right now...
I'll keep looking into it with an open mind!

Hmm?
I'm thinking I'll try to quit while I'm at it.
No... I'm good.

Want cigarettes?
You haven't smoked in a while, right, mister?
There's not really much I want.

You neither.

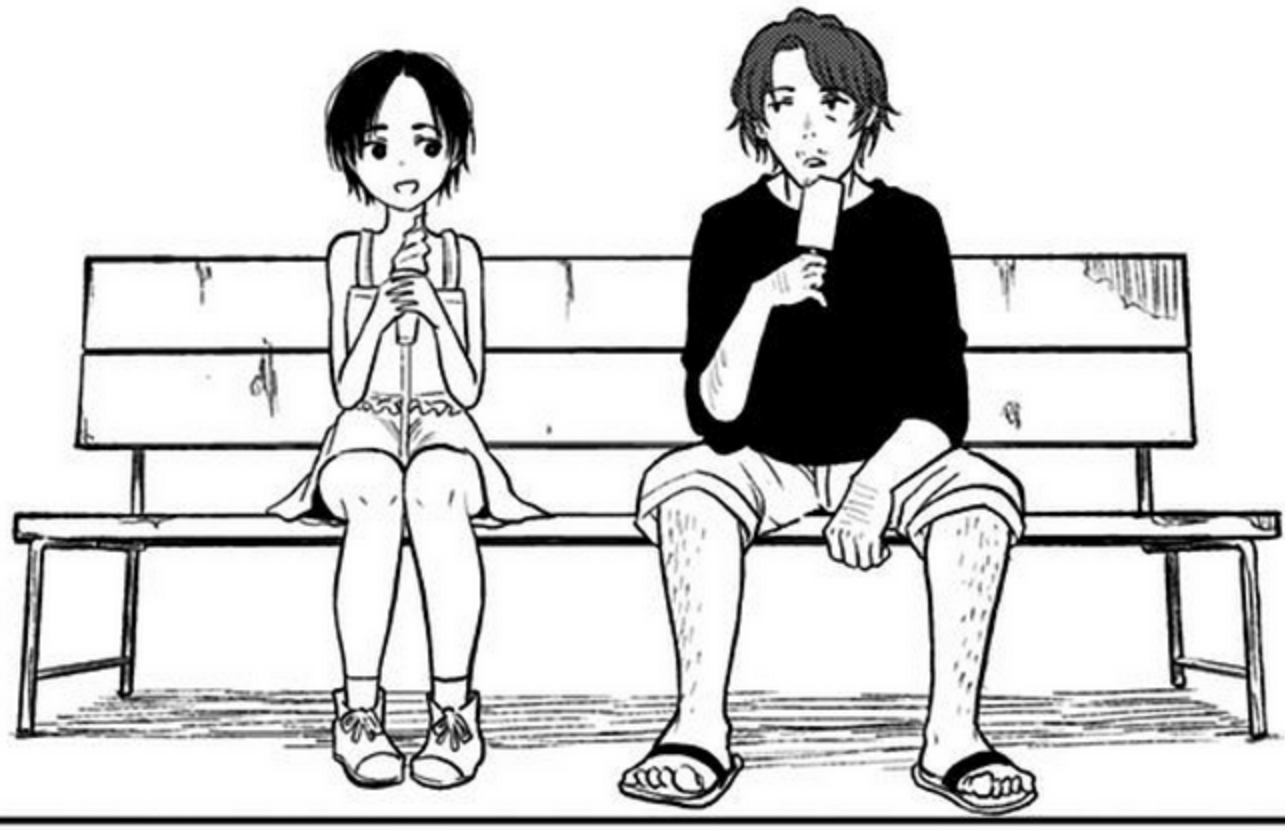
Don't push yourself too hard, okay?

Hey,

mister, I think your lifespan would sell for a lot too.

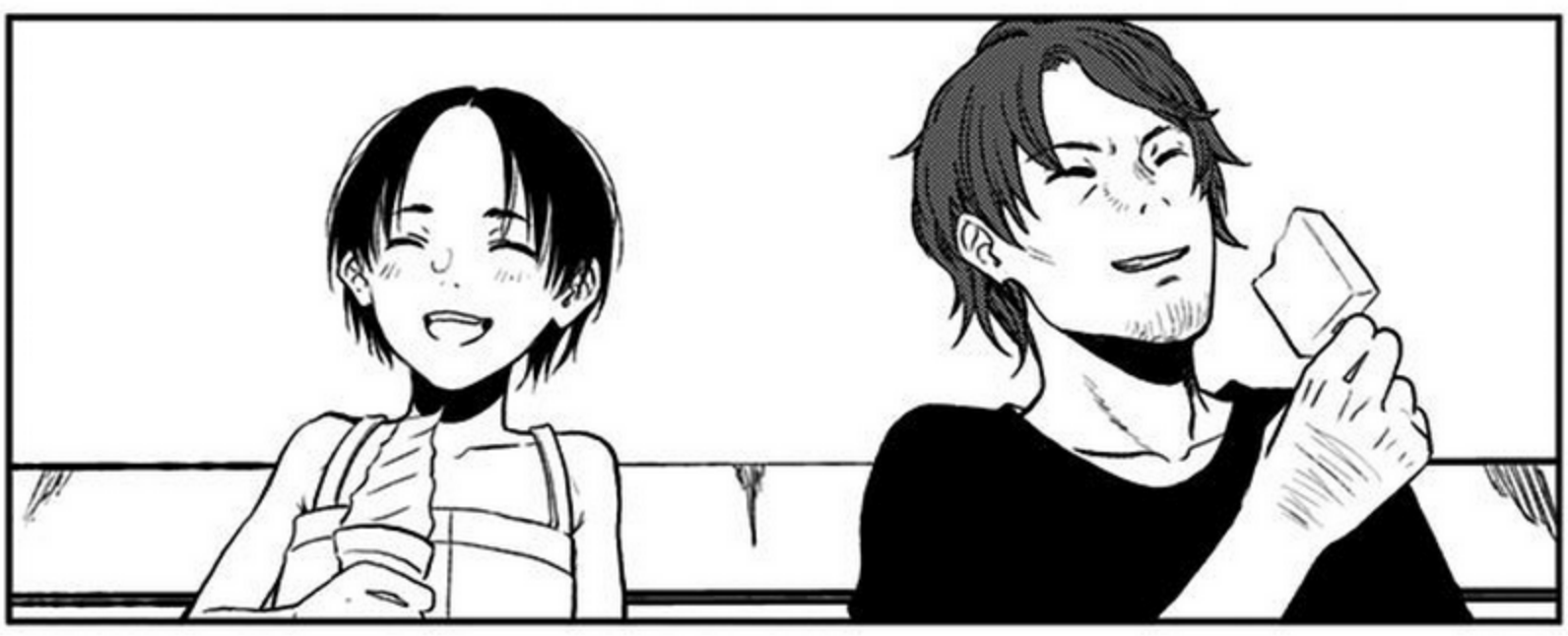
I mean, if you asked me to choose between 3 billion yen or getting to stay with you, I think I'd pick you.

Why do you think that?



...You're bad at hiding when you're embarrassed, mister.

...You're good at lifting my spirits, Hazuki.



With that smile,

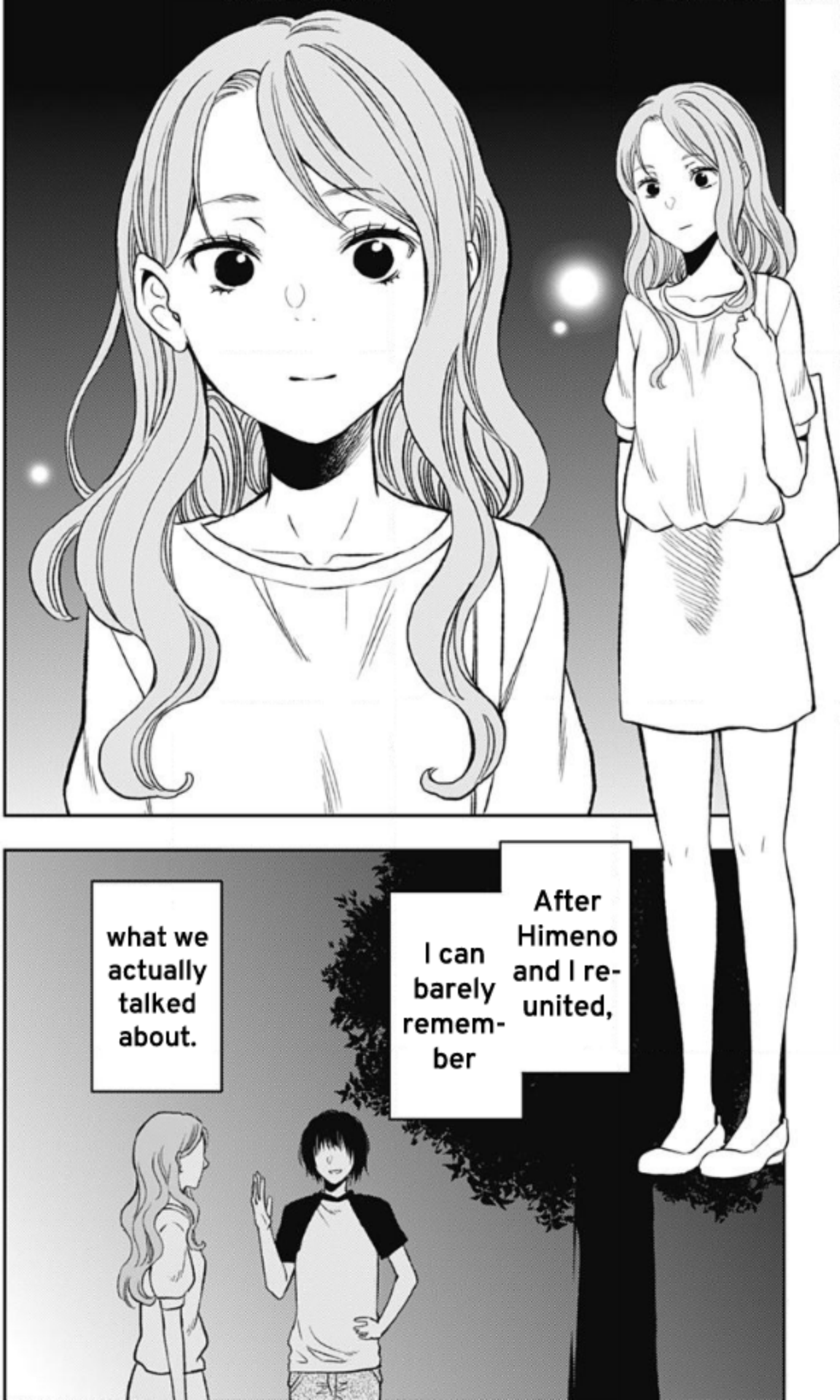
I felt just a little bit more willing to believe that old man's words.

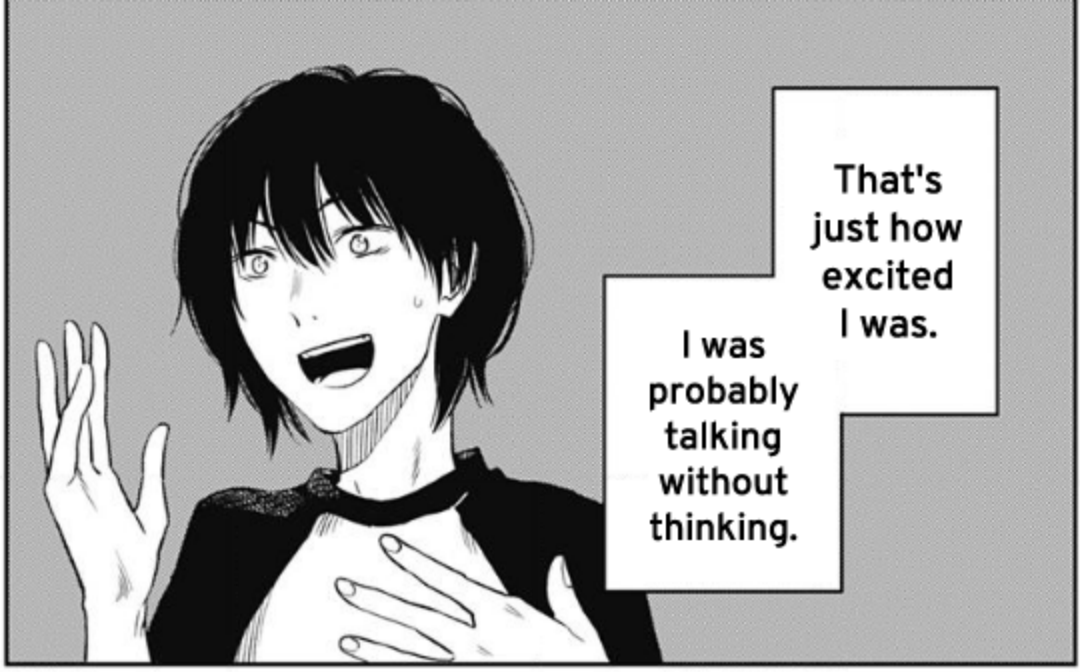
寿命を買い取ってもらった。一年につき、一万円で。

I Sold Off My Lifespan, For 10,000 Yen A Year.

Chapter 8

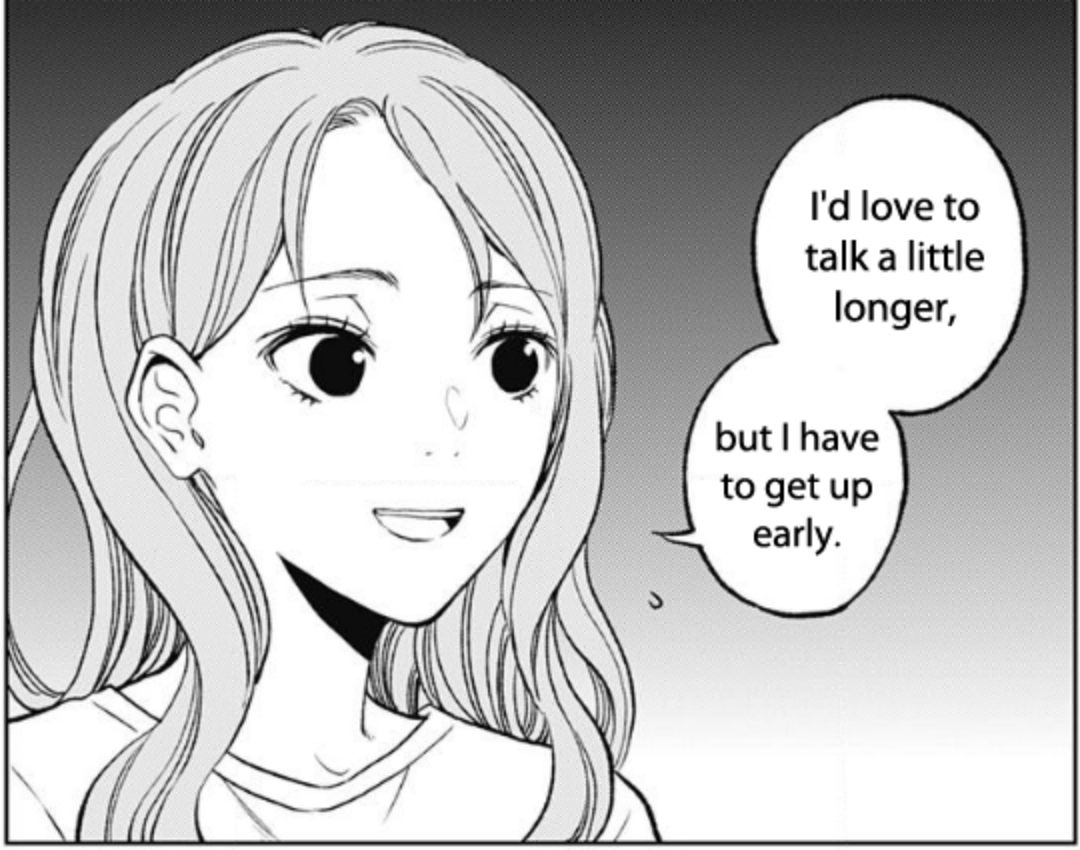
Original: Sugaru Miaki **Manga:** Shoichi Taguchi
("Three Days of Happiness" from Media Works Bunko)
Character Design: E9L / Shoichi Taguchi


After Himeno and I re-united,
I can barely remem-ber
what we actually talked about.


That's just how excited I was.
I was probably talking without thinking.

But it didn't matter what the conversation was.
For me to say something and Himeno to respond, that was all I needed.

It didn't seem she had come to see the festival.
She was here for work reasons, and happened to be parked near the shrine, so she ended up passing through.


I'd love to talk a little longer,
but I have to get up early.

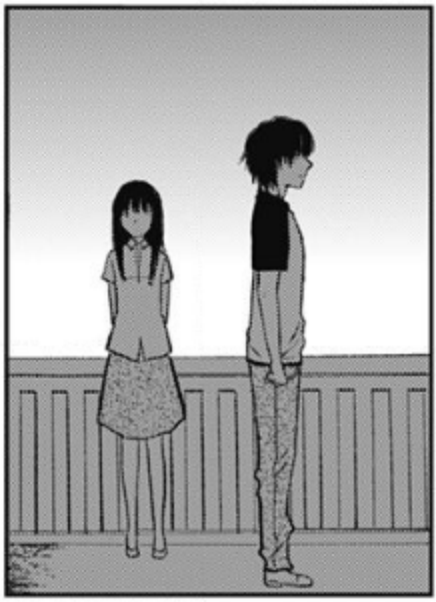
Alcohol's no good,
but a meal...

Hmm ...
Wanna go for a drink sometime soon?
Oh, okay ...

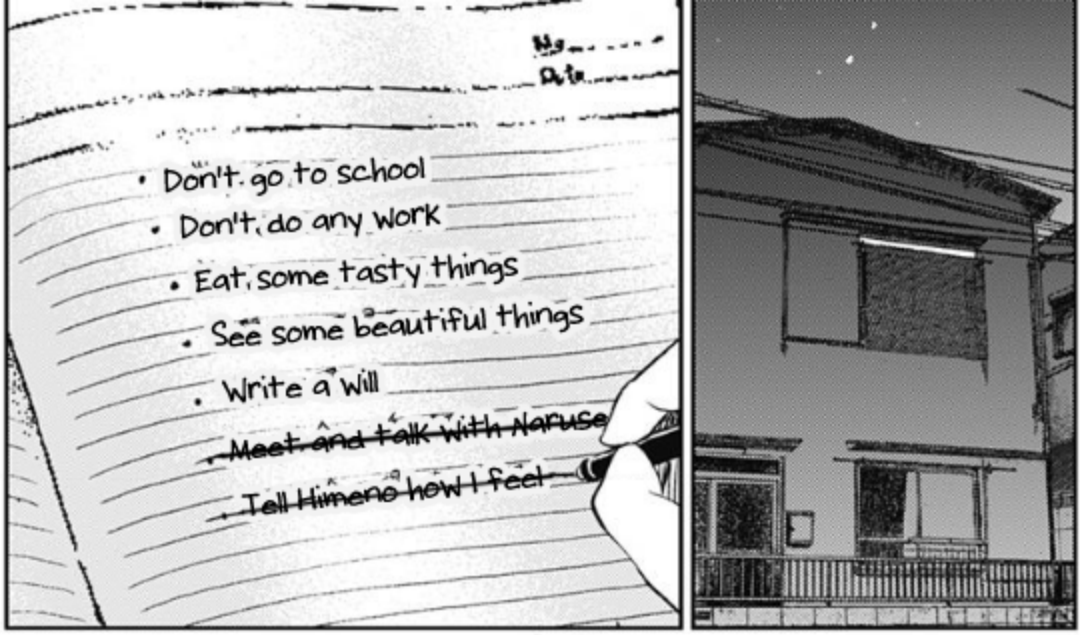
Sure thing.

Promising to meet for dinner two days later,
we parted ways.
たこ焼
りんご飴
やき

Well, that was nice.
I hadn't expected things would go like that, myself.



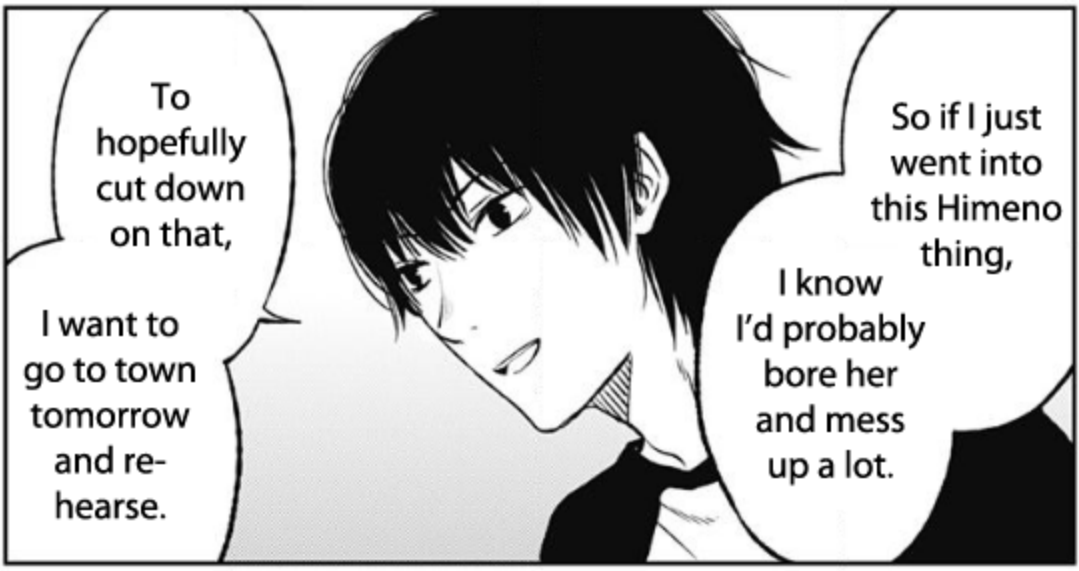
... I suppose sometimes, it is true.
Yes...
You know? Just seems too good to be true.
Me neither.


• Don't go to school
• Don't do any work
• Eat some tasty things
• See some beautiful things
• Write a will
~~• Meet and talk with Naruse~~
~~• Tell Himeno how I feel~~

I've got
kind of a strange request for you.

I don't drink.
It's not that.
Tomorrow, I want you to help prepare me for Himeno.
Prepare you?
In what way?

I know it'd be pointless to hide anything from you now, so I'm gonna be honest.
In twenty years,
I've never really interacted with a girl, ever.


So if I just went into this Himeno thing,
I know I'd probably bore her and mess up a lot.
To hopefully cut down on that,
I want to go to town tomorrow and re-hearse.

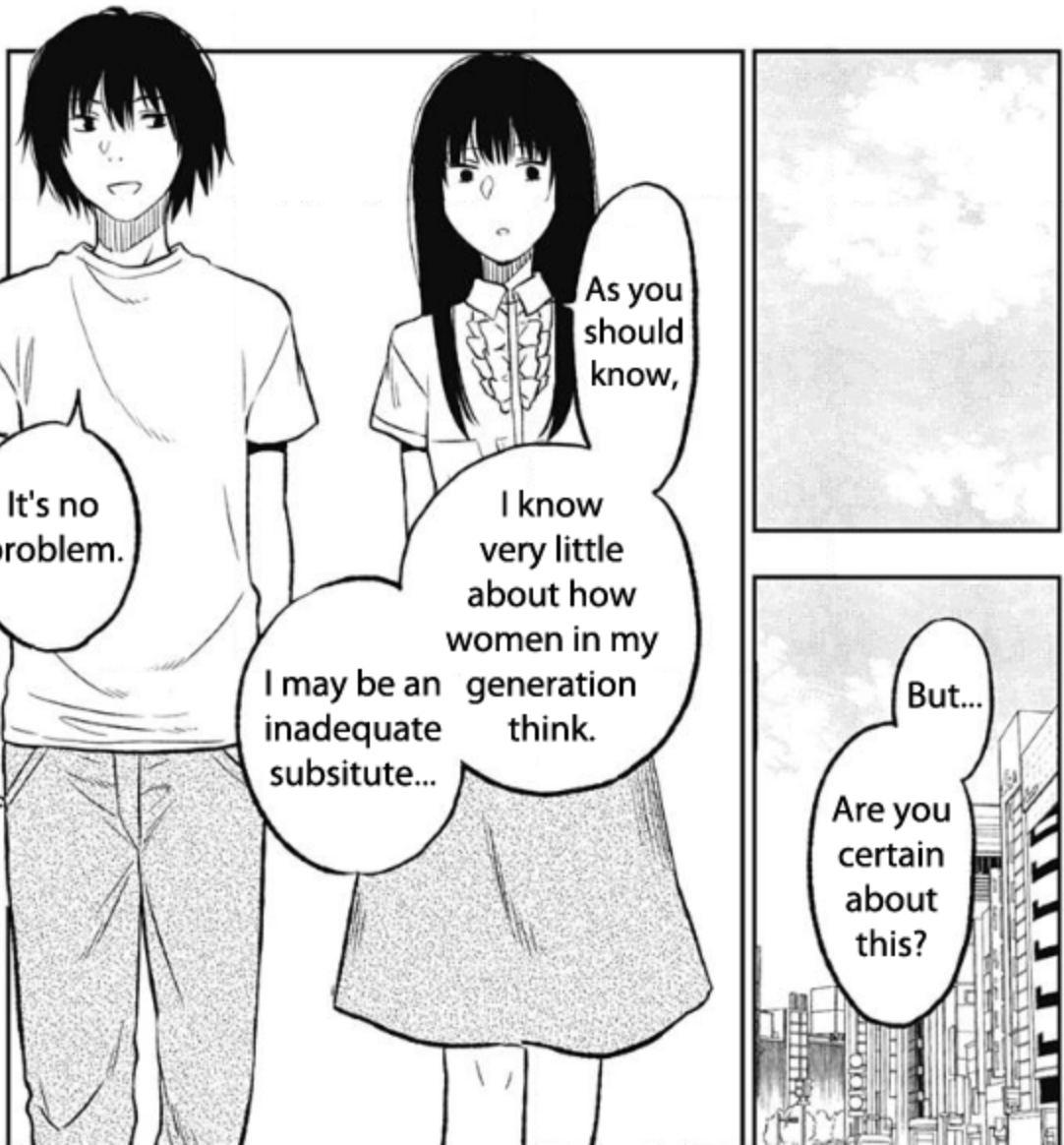
...If I'm not mistaken...
You're saying
you want me to play the part of Ms. Himeno?

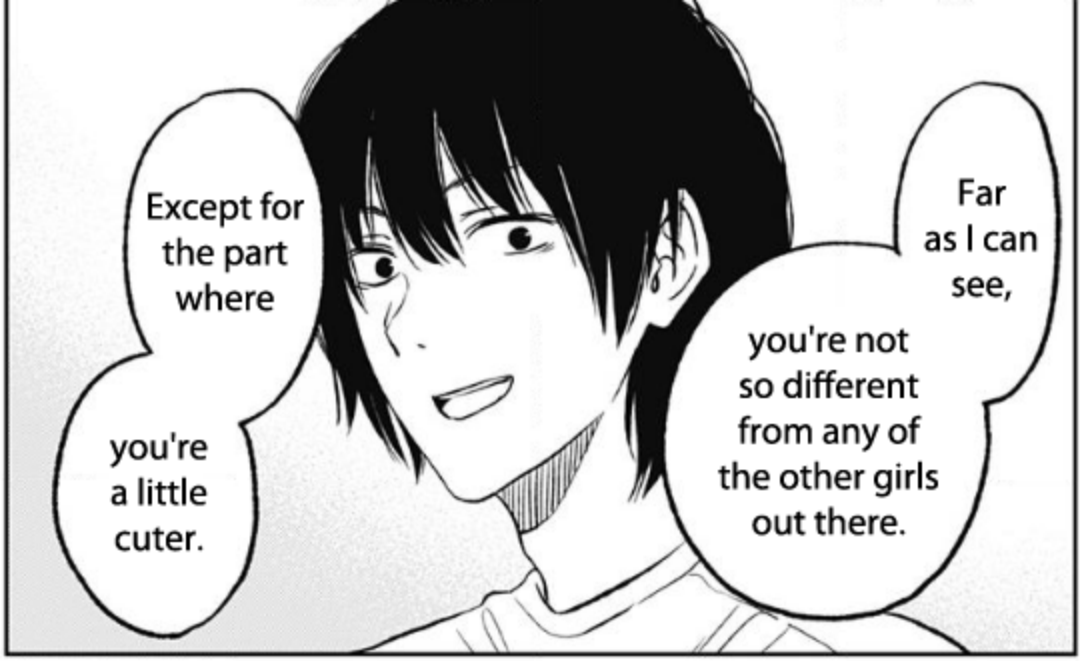
but in practice, I imagine there would be issues...
Well, I don't much mind,
That's right. Will you accept?

Not a prob-lem. Why should I care what people think?
Yes, that.
Oh, you mean how I'm the only one who can see you?

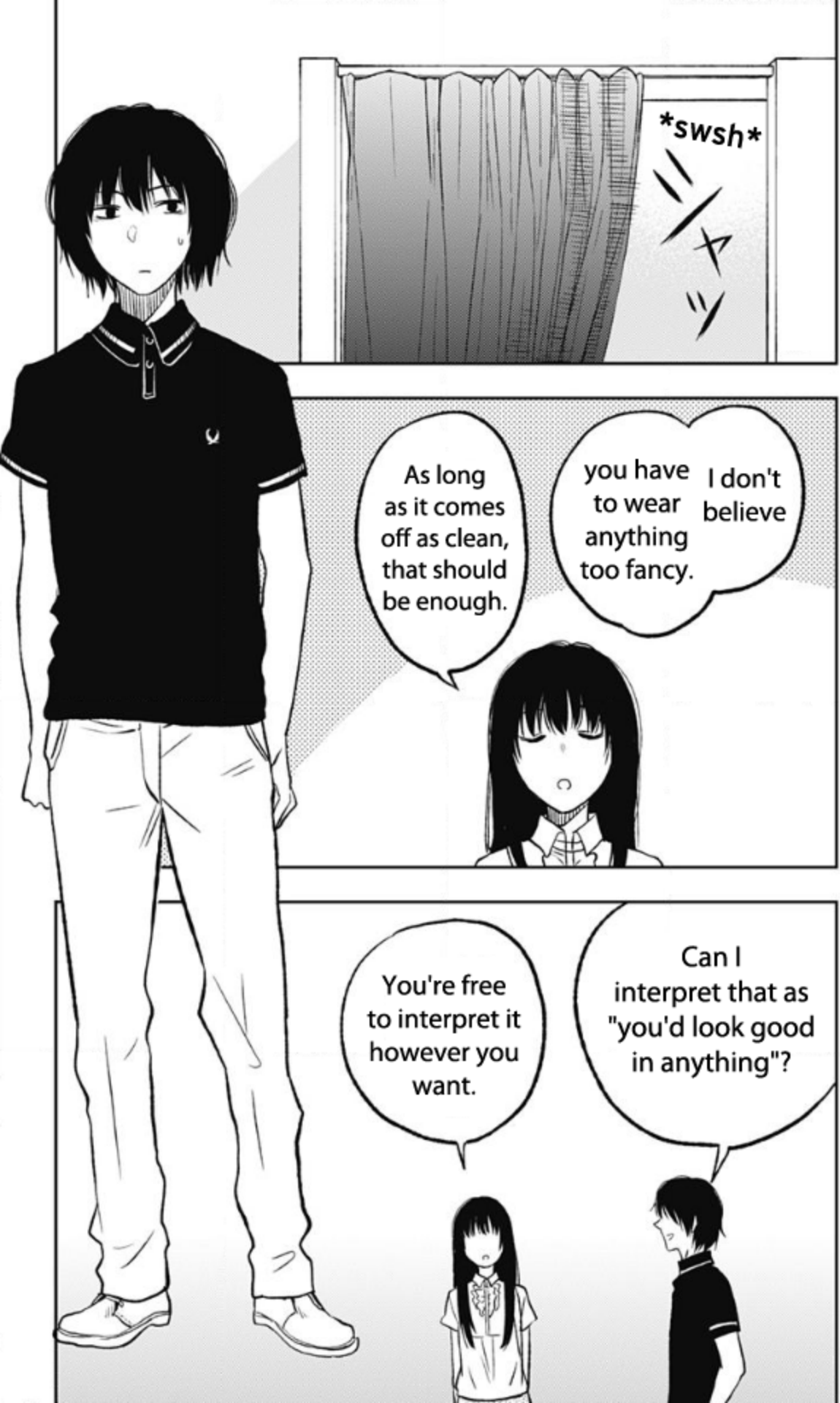
as long as Himeno likes me just a little,
Even if every-body else ridicules me,
All that mat-ters is simply that Himeno thinks well of me.
I'm satisfied with that.

When it comes to Ms. Himeno,
you really become like a different person,
don't you.


As you should know,
I know very little about how women in my generation think.
I may be an inadequate subsitute...
It's no problem.
But...
Are you certain about this?


Except for the part where
you're a little cuter.
Far as I can see,
you're not so different from any of the other girls out there.

if it's no problem to you,
then very well.
... Well,


swsh
I don't believe you have to wear anything too fancy.
As long as it comes off as clean, that should be enough.
Can I interpret that as "you'd look good in anything"?
You're free to interpret it however you want.

No need to air your every thought.
Seems to me it's a compliment.
Got it.
I'll interpret it as I want.

I'm meeting someone important.
Tom-orrow,

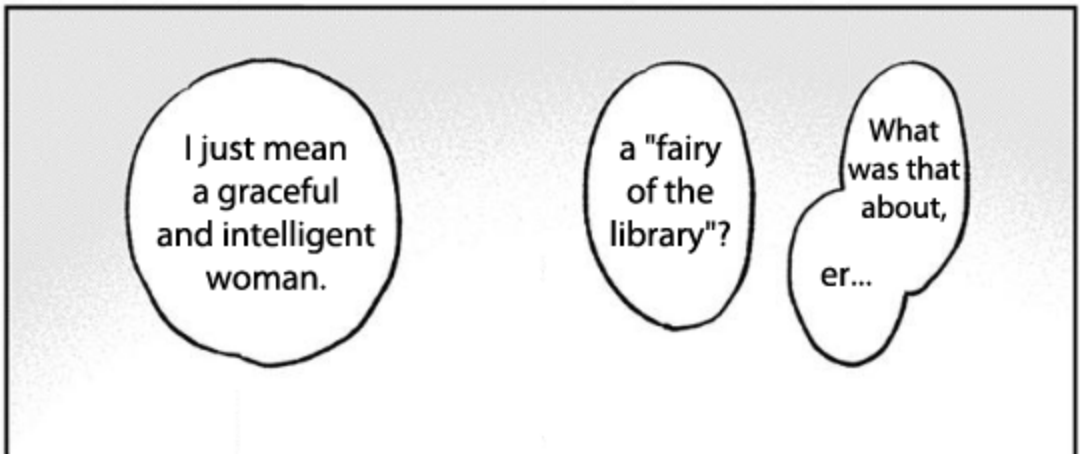
and the beautician passionately cut my hair,
giving me a number of tips for my big day.
I did as Miyagi advised,

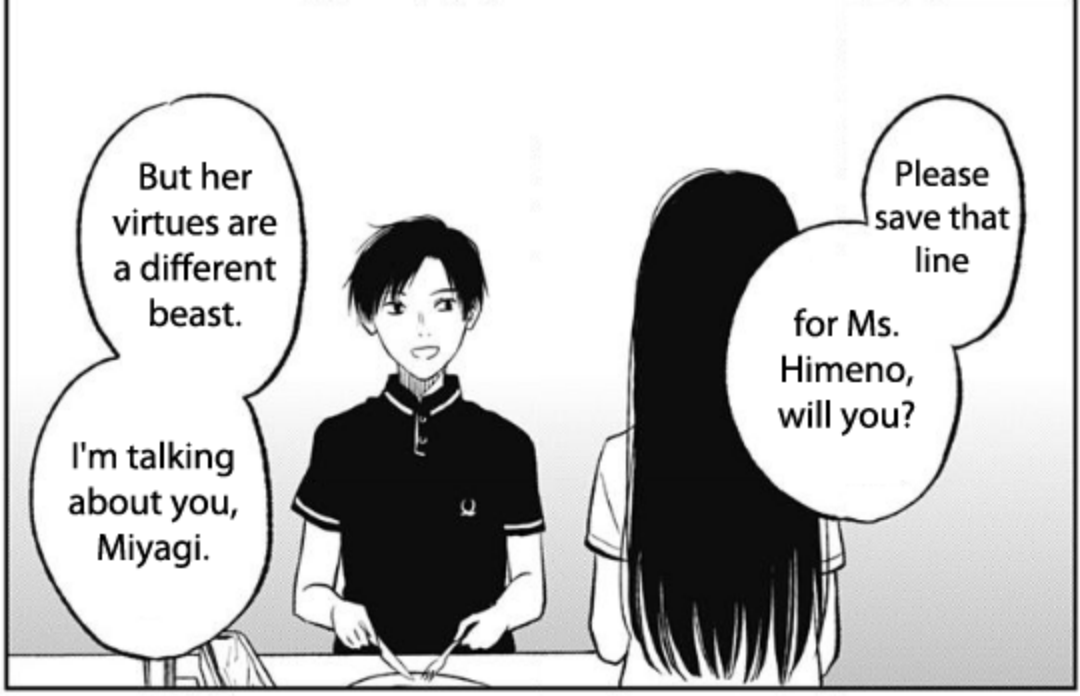
you're almost like an entirely different person from yesterday.
Why,

Indeed.
I sure don't look like a guy whose life is only worth 10,000 yen a year, huh?
Yeah.

You look as if
you're someone with the promise of a happy future.
Thank you.
And when you smile, Miyagi,
you look like a fairy of the library.

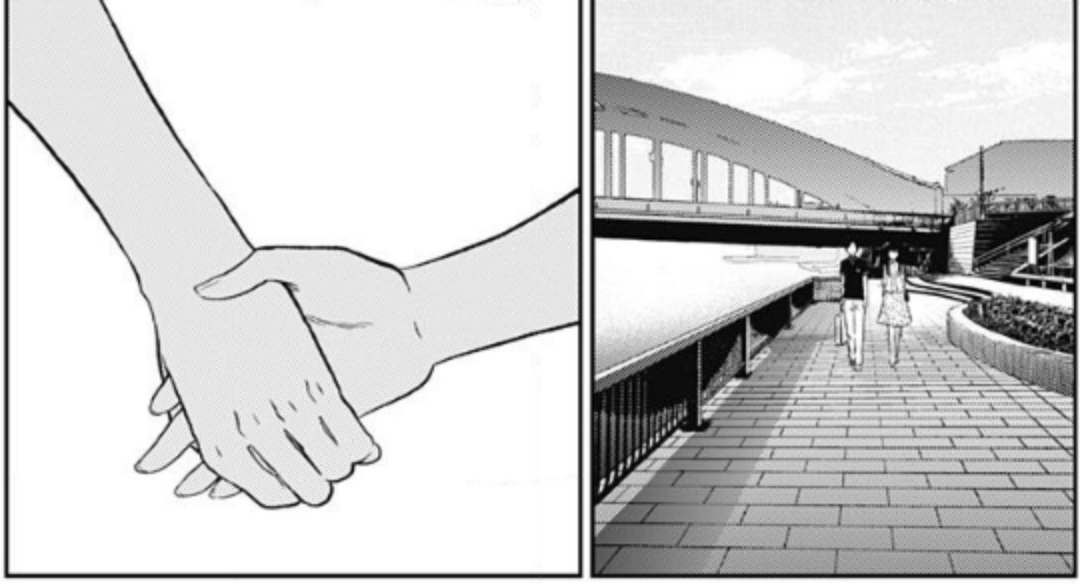
...
You're rather chipper today, Mr. Kusunoki.
Seems I am.

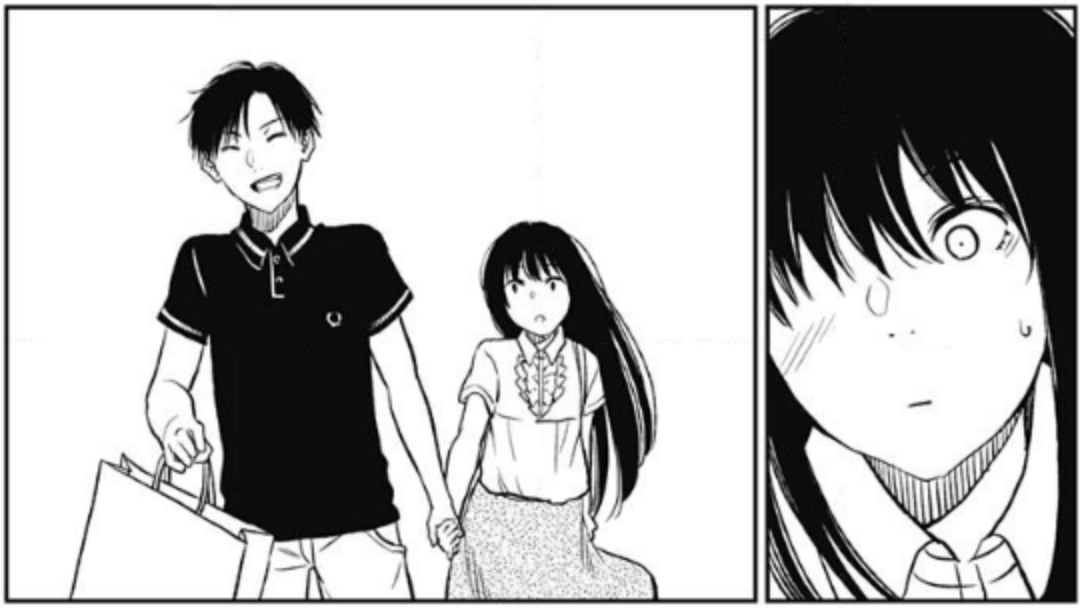

What was that about, er...
a "fairy of the library"?
I just mean a graceful and intelligent woman.


But her virtues are a different beast.
I'm talking about you, Miyagi.
Please save that line for Ms. Himeno, will you?

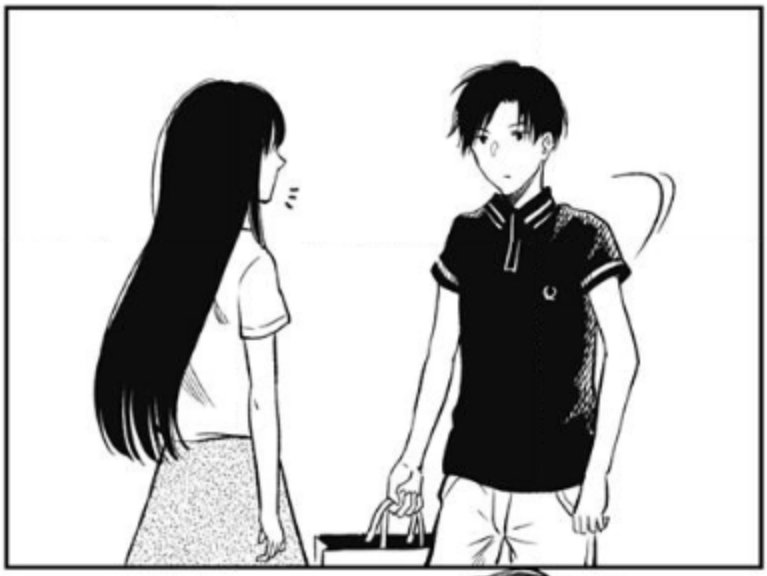
...Well, thank you.

Pretty strange, huh.
Of course, in reality, both you and I are worth next to nothing as people.





All right.
Try to think of me as Himeno and seduce me,
Mr. Drunk Kusunoki.



... Right.

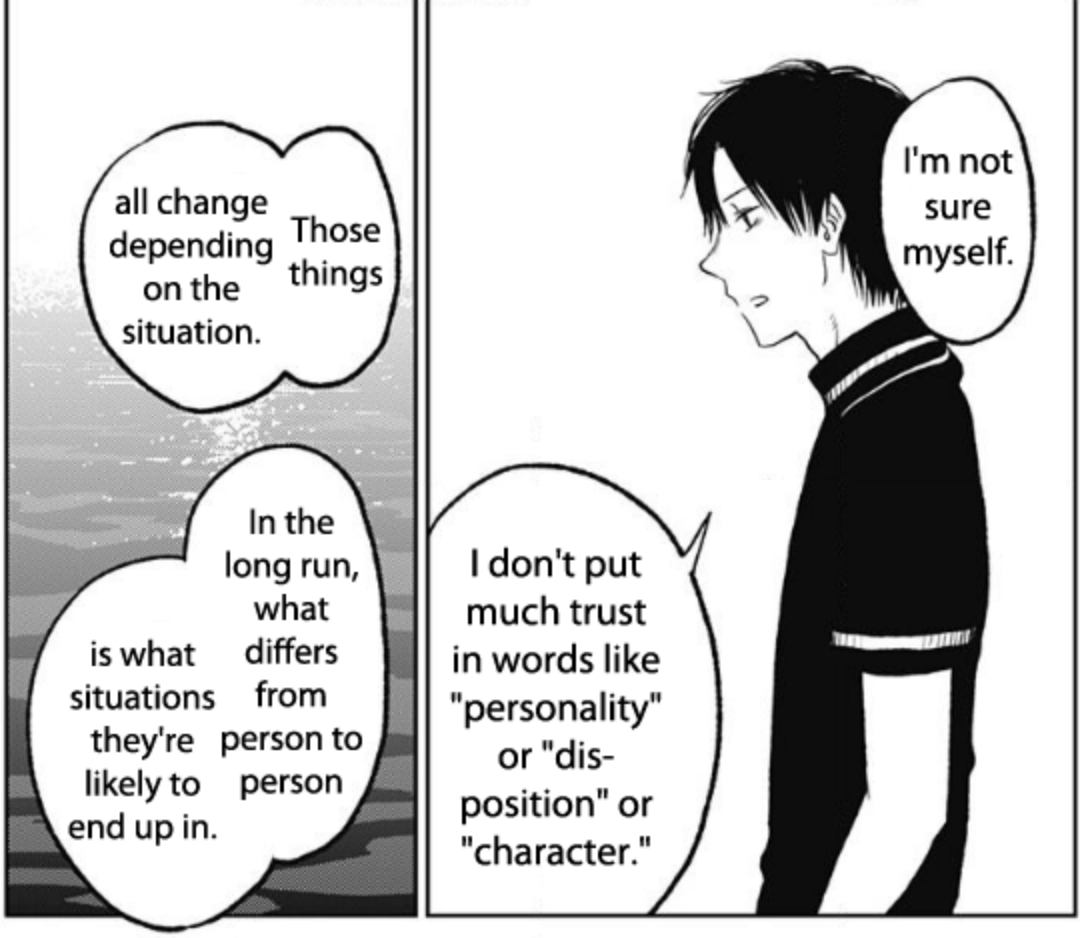
You appearing before me was the best thing that's ever happened in my life.
And when you left my sight, that was the worst thing to ever happen.

And now,
depending on your reply,
I might have a new best or worst.

That was...
a pretty smooth delivery for such a roundabout pickup line.
I'm impr-essed.

So then
how do you think Himeno would reply?
Ah, well, if it were Ms. Himeno...

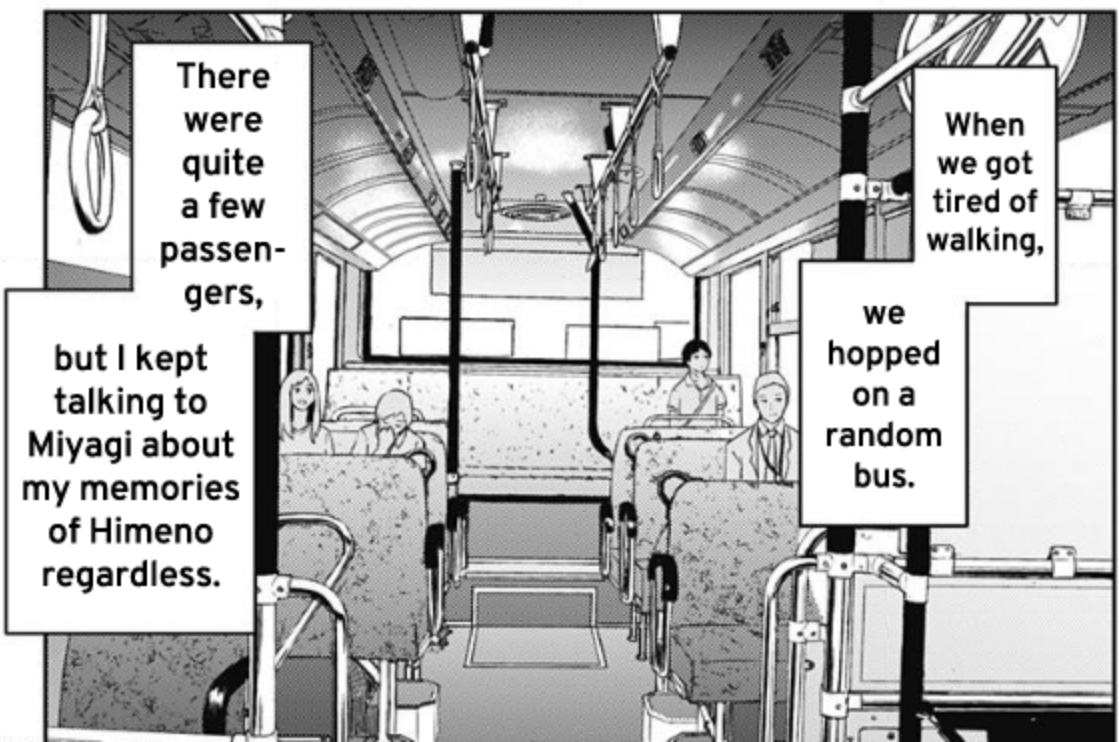
Huh.
What if it were Miyagi?
"What's this nonsense all of a sudden?"
she might say,
and try to laugh it off.
Don't worry about it.
Joking.
...I don't catch your meaning.
Mr. Kusunoki, are you truly that kind of person?
The kind to joke.

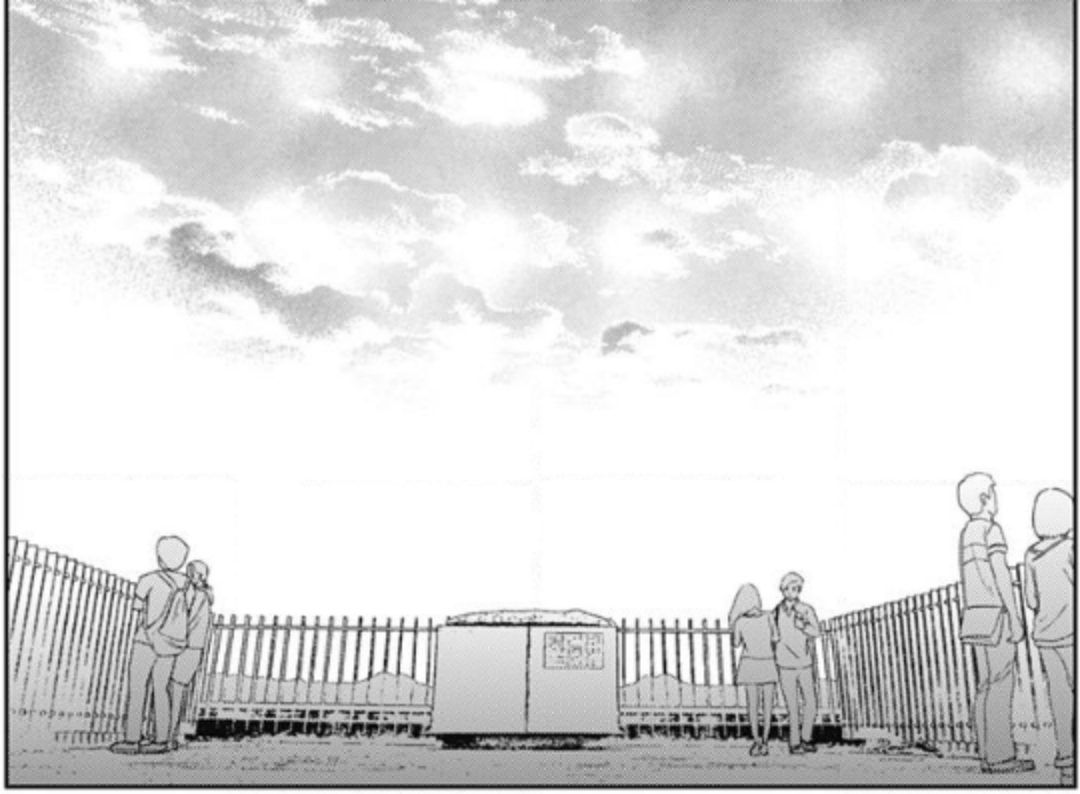

I'm not sure myself.
I don't put much trust in words like "personality" or "disposition" or "character."
Those things all change depending on the situation.
In the long run, what differs from person to person is what situations they're likely to end up in.

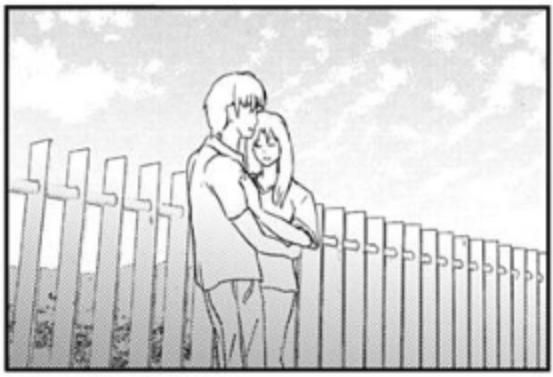
People put a lot of faith in consistency,
but it might be more superficial than most people think.

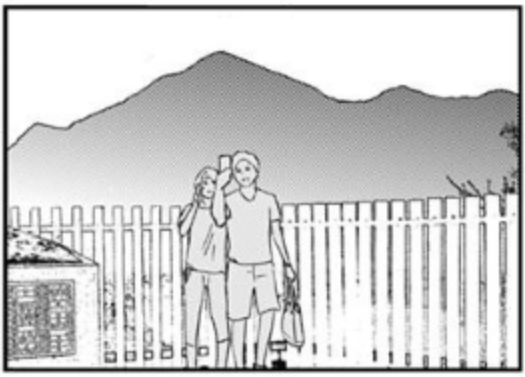
I wouldn't have expected you of all people to say something like that.
When there's a depressing statistic, everyone likes to think they're the exception.

I suppose that is true.


There were quite a few passen-gers,
but I kept talking to Miyagi about my memories of Himeno regardless.
When we got tired of walking,
we hopped on a random bus.

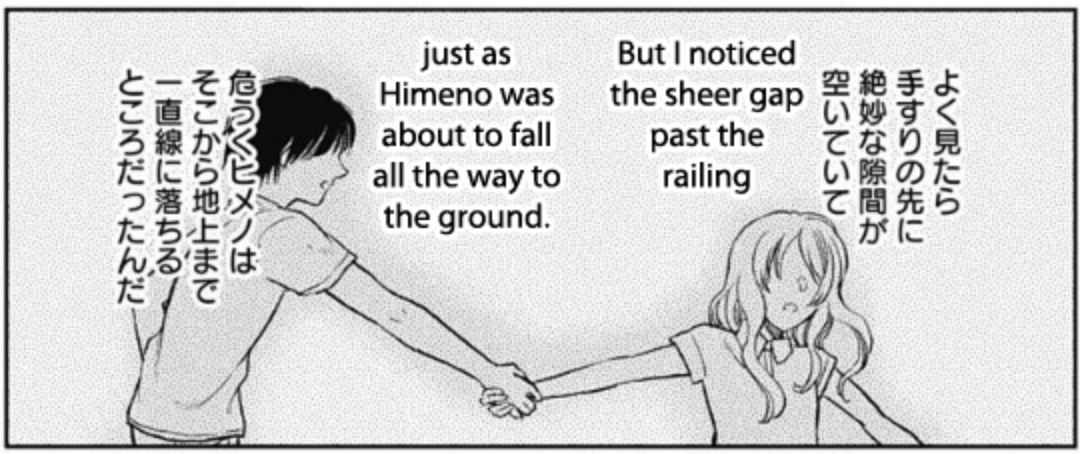


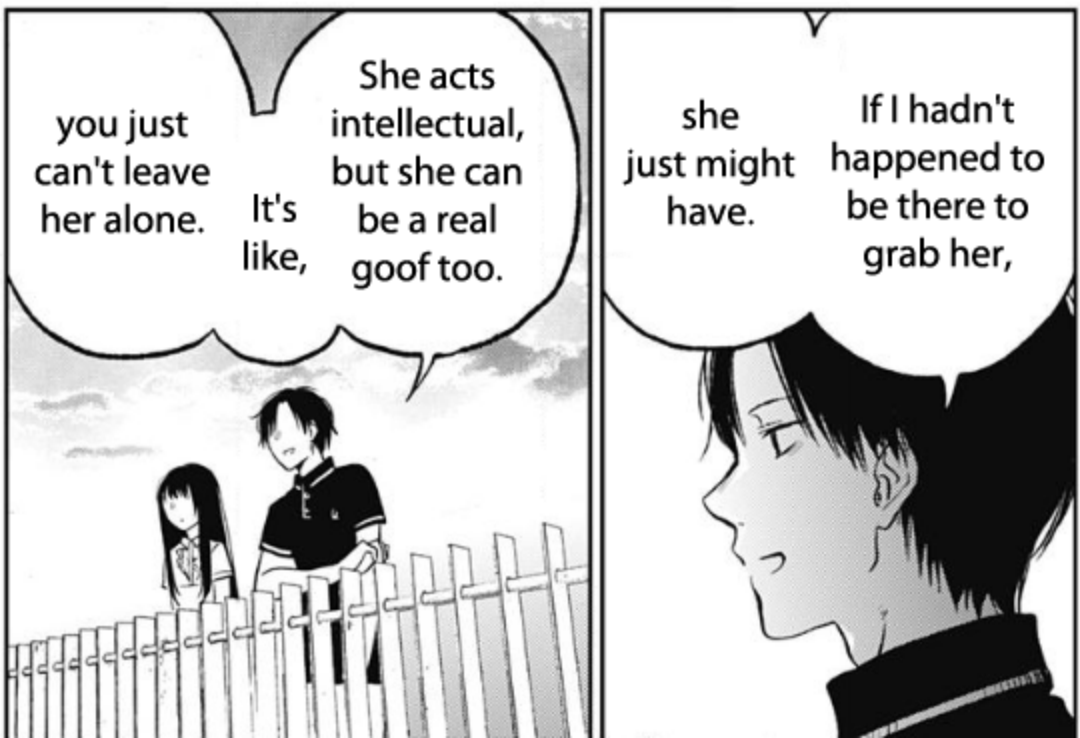




Himeno was with me too.
The very first time I came here,

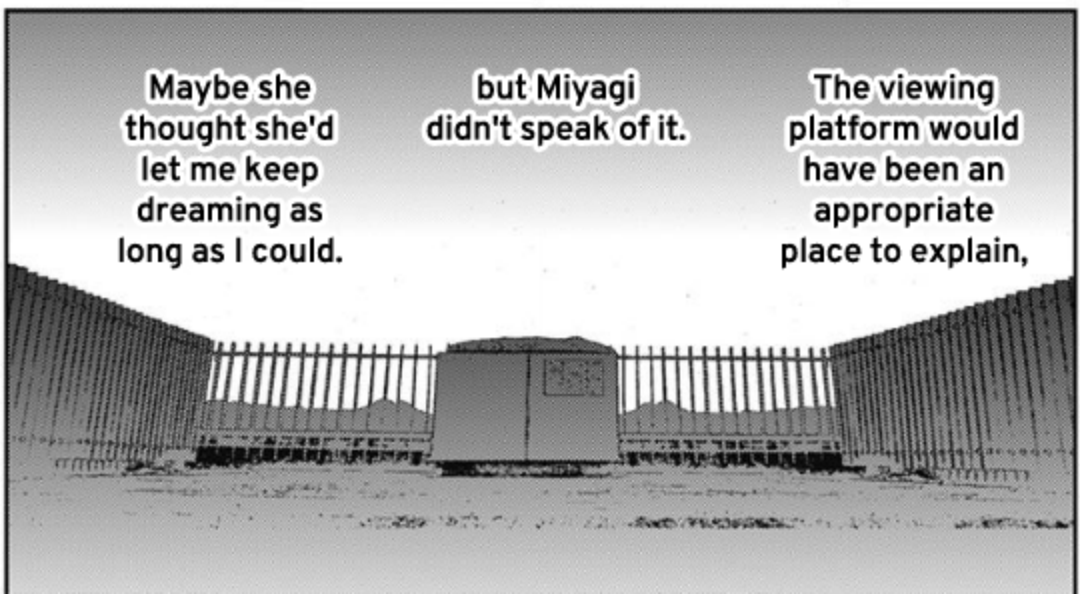
That railing up there,
at the top of the spiral stairs,
is just the right height for a kid to want to get on top of.
So even Himeno tried to climb up...

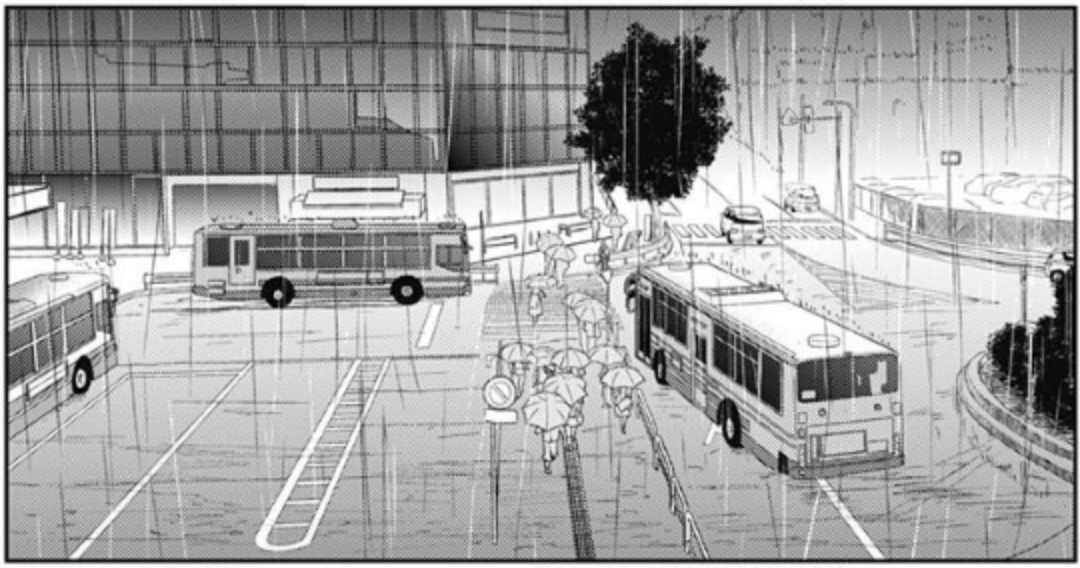

よく見たら手すりの先に絶妙な隙間が空いていて
But I noticed the sheer gap past the railing
just as Himeno was about to fall all the way to the ground.
危うくヒメノはそこから地上まで一直線に落ちるところだったんだ


If I hadn't happened to be there to grab her,
she just might have.
She acts intellectual, but she can be a real goof too.
It's like,
you just can't leave her alone.

She had yet to tell me something crucial.

At that point, she knew more than I did.





Outside the bookstore at 5...
KUWAZAWA BOOK

Okay... It's no rush.

Kusu-noki!

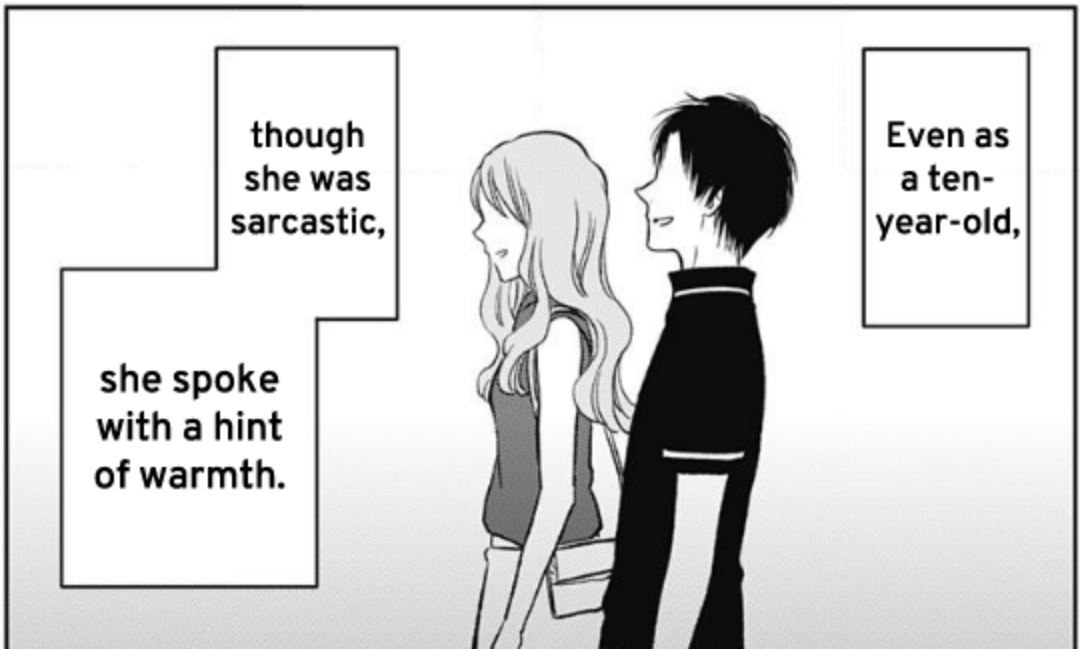
...

Even if Himeno
hadn't been someone I'd been waiting to see for a decade,

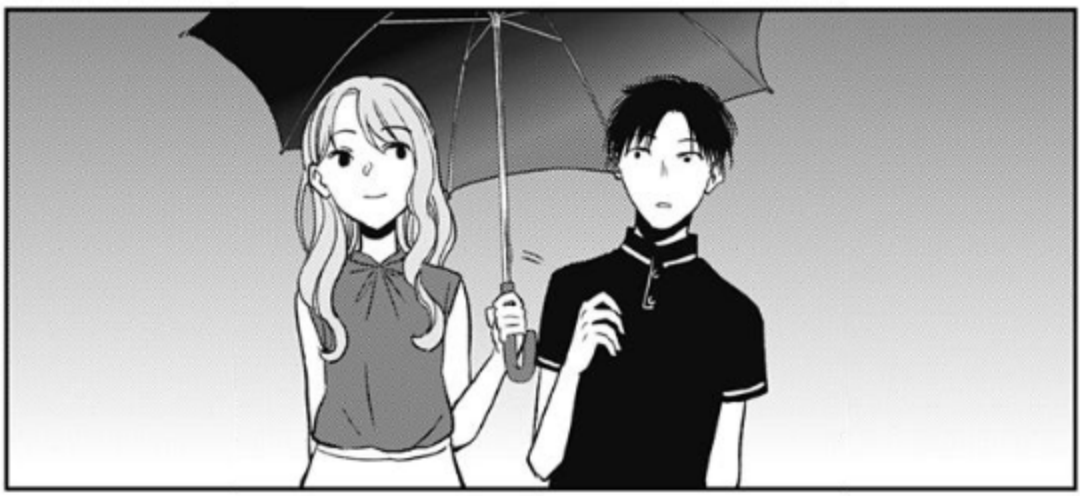
I still would have said she radiated beauty that day.
Bus was late because of the rain.
Sorry to make you wait.
I'll treat you to some-thing.
No, allow me.
Forget about that for today.
Hmm.
So are you expecting a "next time"?
Yep.

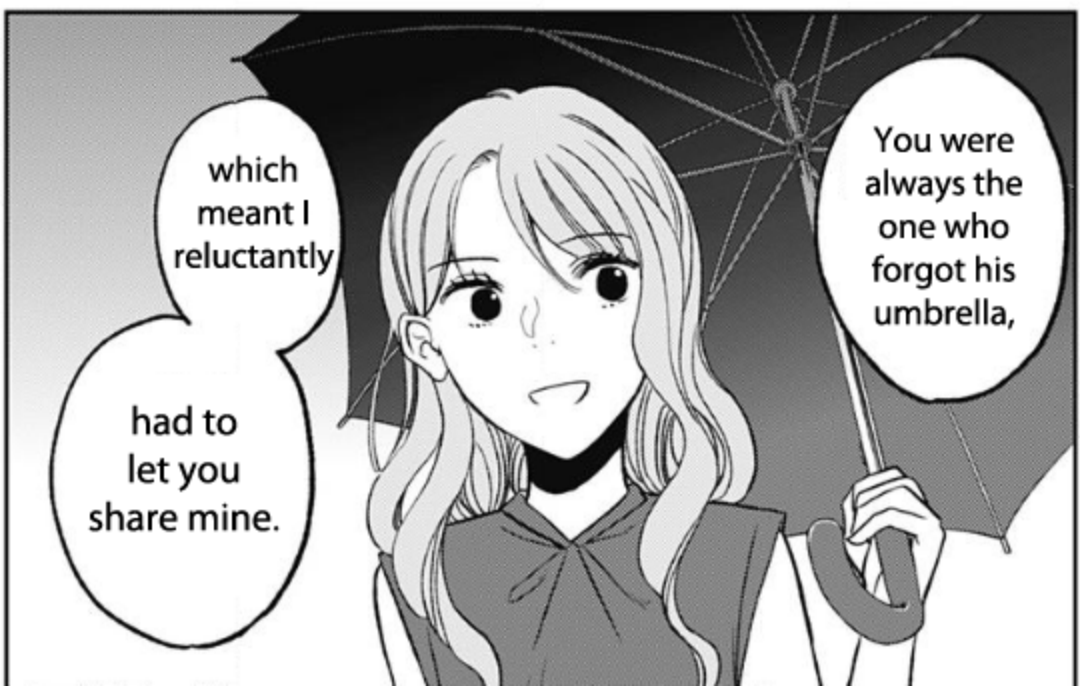
That's just the sort of line Himeno would say...

Himeno really hadn't changed a bit since then.

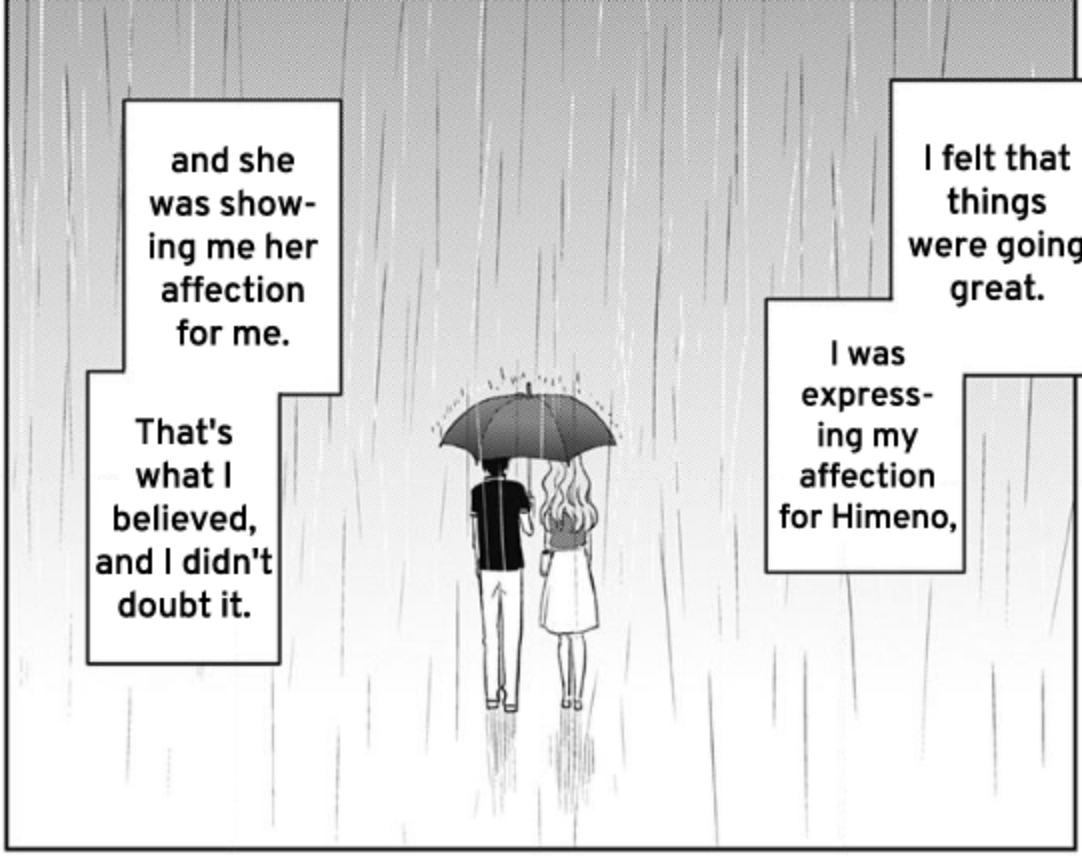


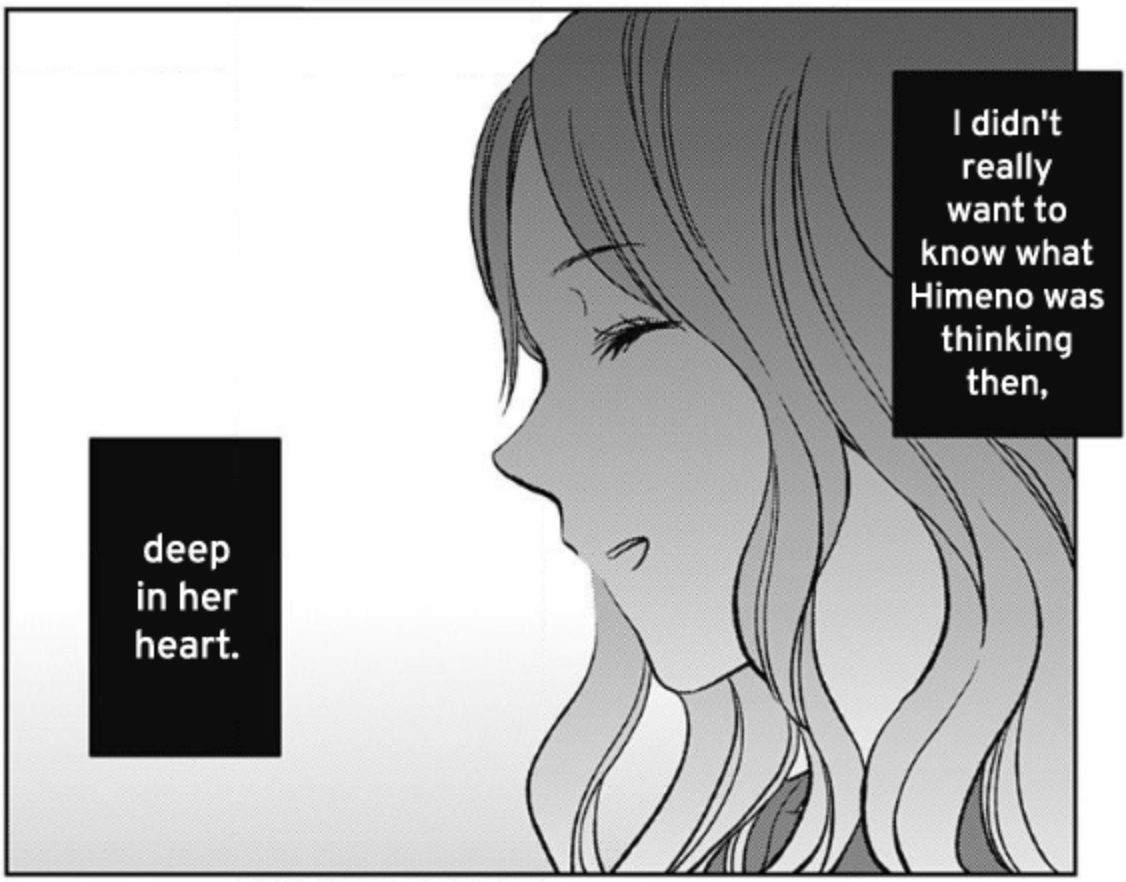
fwoomp




You were always the one who forgot his umbrella,
which meant I reluctantly had to let you share mine.

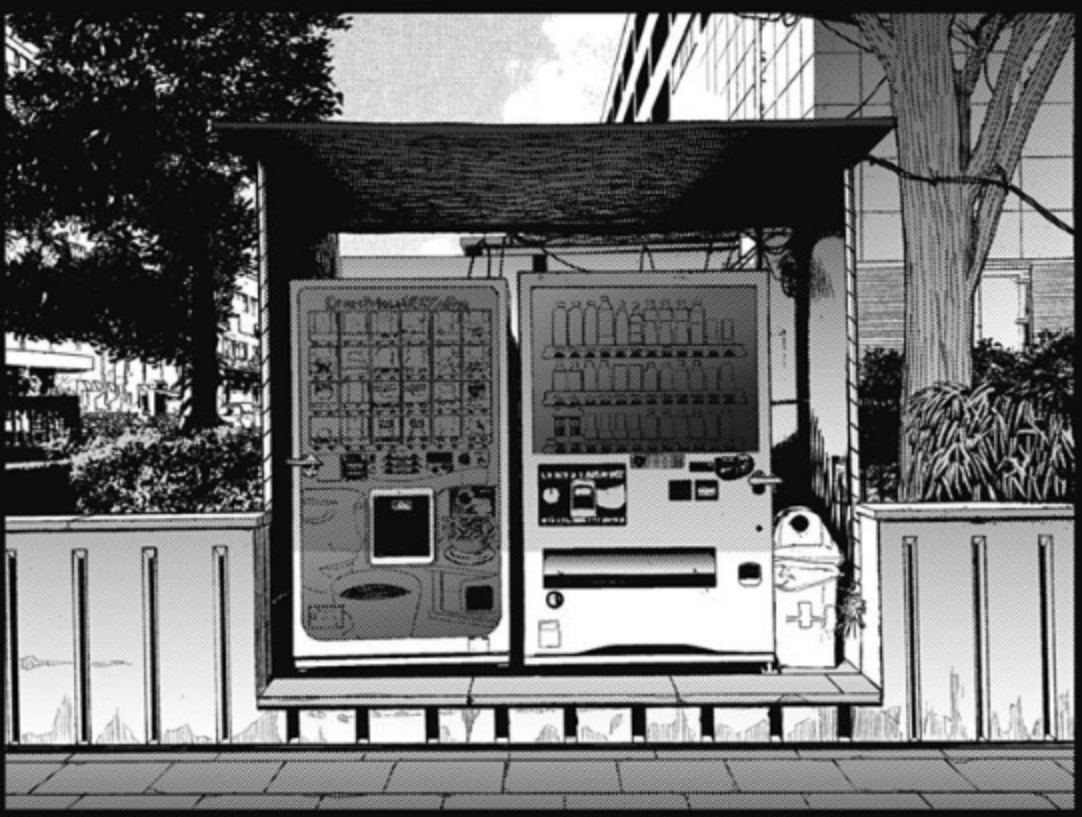
Aha.
So then, wouldn't it be good to reverse it from now on?
Yeah, you're right.
By the way, what were you doing there the other day?
Looking for you, Himeno.
Liar.
Ha-ha-ha...
It's true.


I felt that things were going great.
I was expressing my affection for Himeno,
and she was showing me her affection for me.
That's what I believed, and I didn't doubt it.


I didn't really want to know what Himeno was thinking then,
deep in her heart.

寿命を買い取ってもらった。一年につき、一万円で。

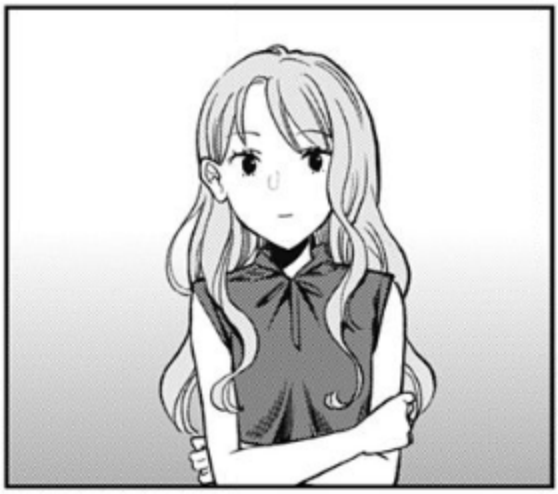
I Sold Off My Lifespan, For 10,000 Yen A Year.



Chapter 9

Original: Sugaru Miaki **Manga:** Shoichi Taguchi
("Three Days of Happiness" from Media Works Bunko)
Character Design: E9L / Shoichi Taguchi

Prosci-
utto di
Parma...
the
gorgonzola
cream
pasta,
and a
salad,
please.



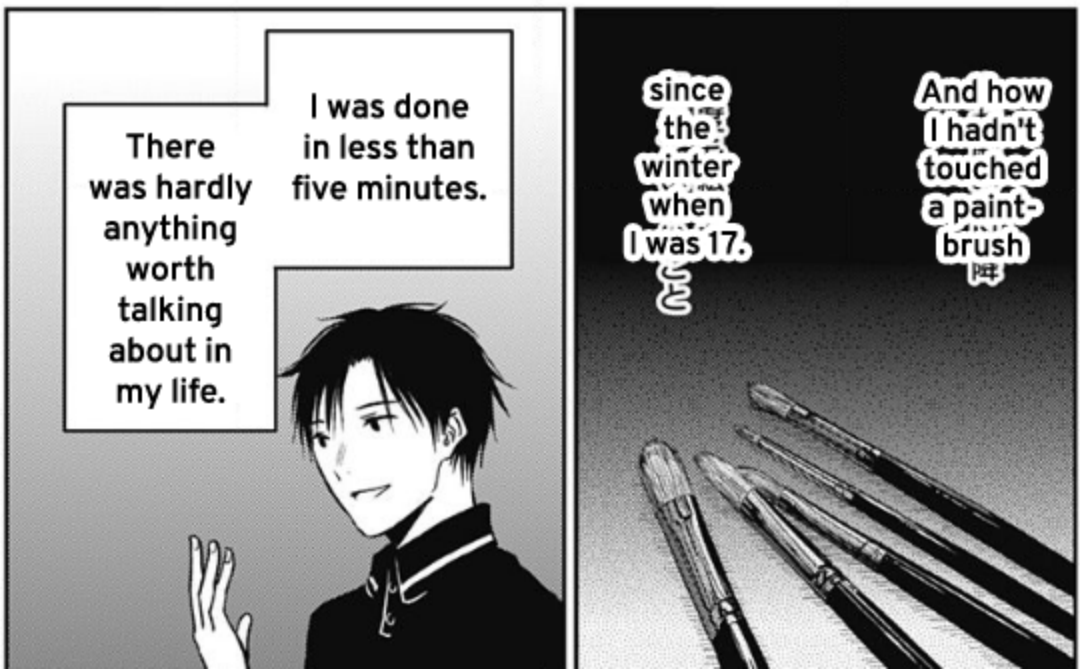
I'd like to
hear about
you first,
Himeno.

No,
let's start
with you.

I'd
like to
know
what you've
been up to all
these years,
Kusunoki.

...Well, this isn't going to be all that interesting...
Starting with a disclaimer,
I talked about middle and high school.

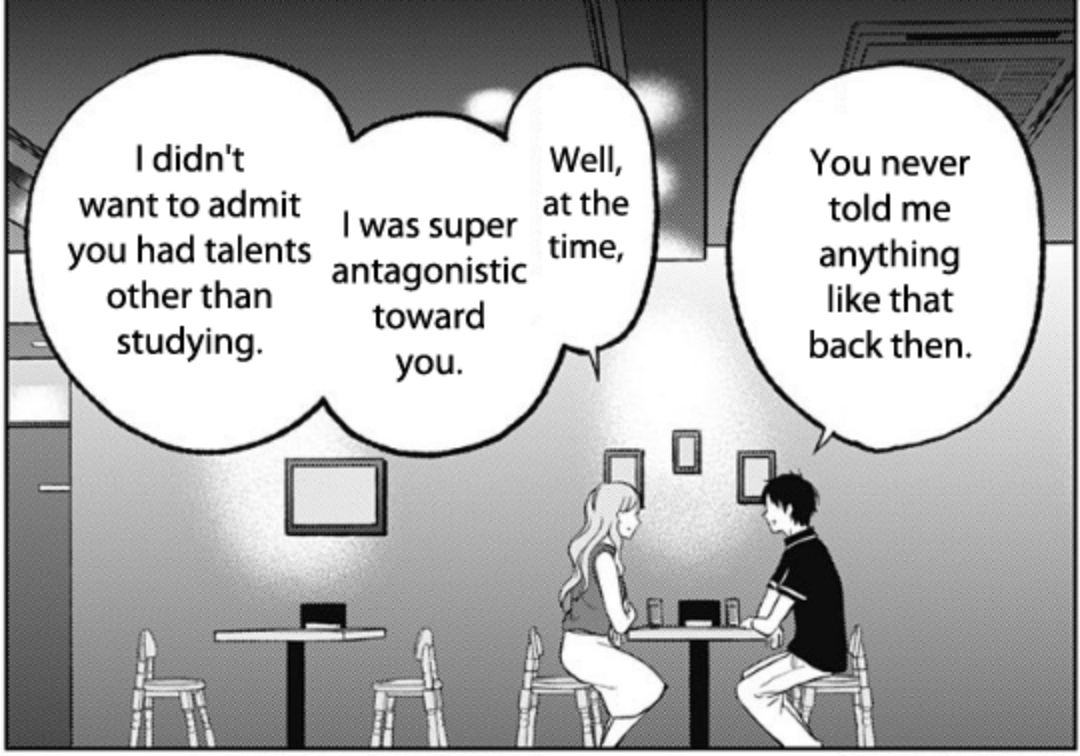
How I started to see my scholarly abilities gradually decline in middle school third year.
How I went to the best college-prep high school in the area,
yet ended up now attending a shockingly average college.


And how I hadn't touched a paintbrush since the winter when I was 17.
I was done in less than five minutes.
There was hardly anything worth talking about in my life.

Huh, so you gave up art?
That's too bad.
Person-ally. I liked your pictures, Kusunoki.
If you were still draw-ing, I dunno what I would've done.
...Big difference from this other guy I know.

You were drawing *all* the time.
And you made such beautiful, breathtaking pictures
like it was nothing.
I could never come close.

You probably never noticed,
but sometimes I took your pictures home
and stared at them for ages.


You never told me anything like that back then.
Well, at the time,
I was super antagonistic toward you.
I didn't want to admit you had talents other than studying.

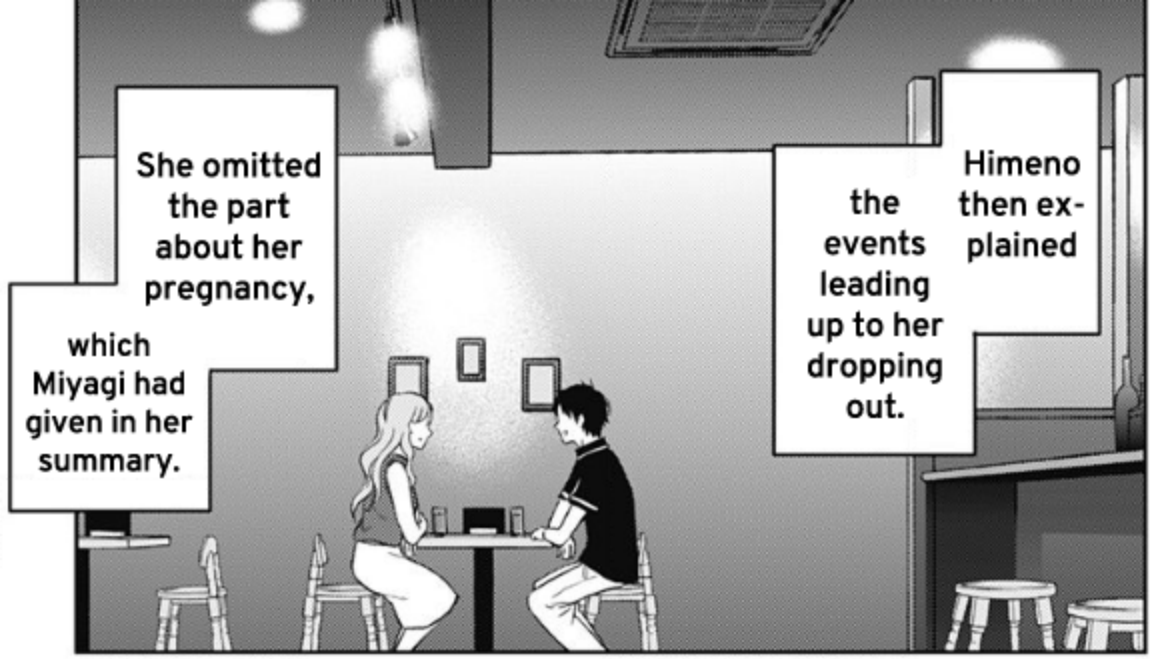
Yeah, I was antagonistic too.
We were about the same in academics,
yet it seemed the adults would always heap their praise on pretty little Himeno.

I thought it was just unfair that someone could be such a capable student *and* beautiful.
...

I guess nobody would've expected
a girl like that would drop out of high school.
Yeah...

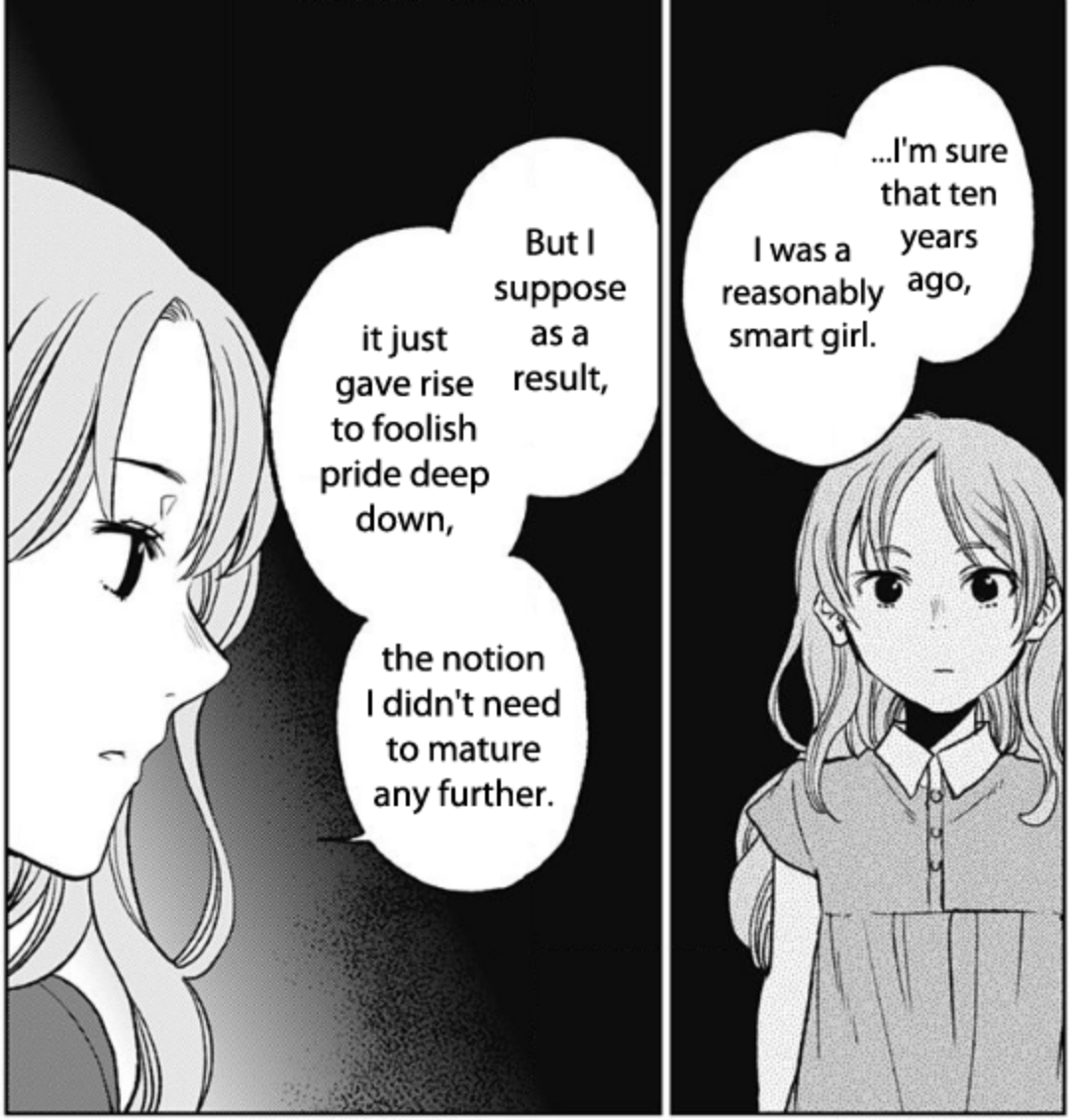
So you didn't know after all.
Huh.
... Drop out?

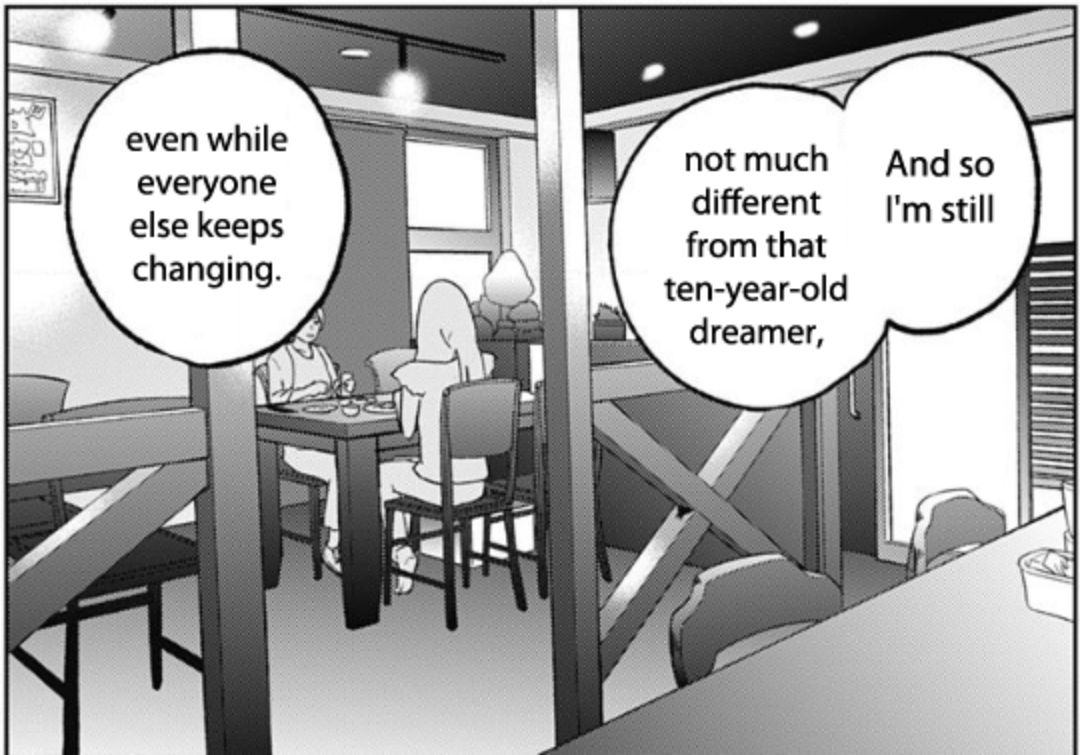
I can't say that this is too interesting either, but...
...Um,


She omitted the part about her pregnancy,
which Miyagi had given in her summary.
Himeno then explained the events leading up to her dropping out.

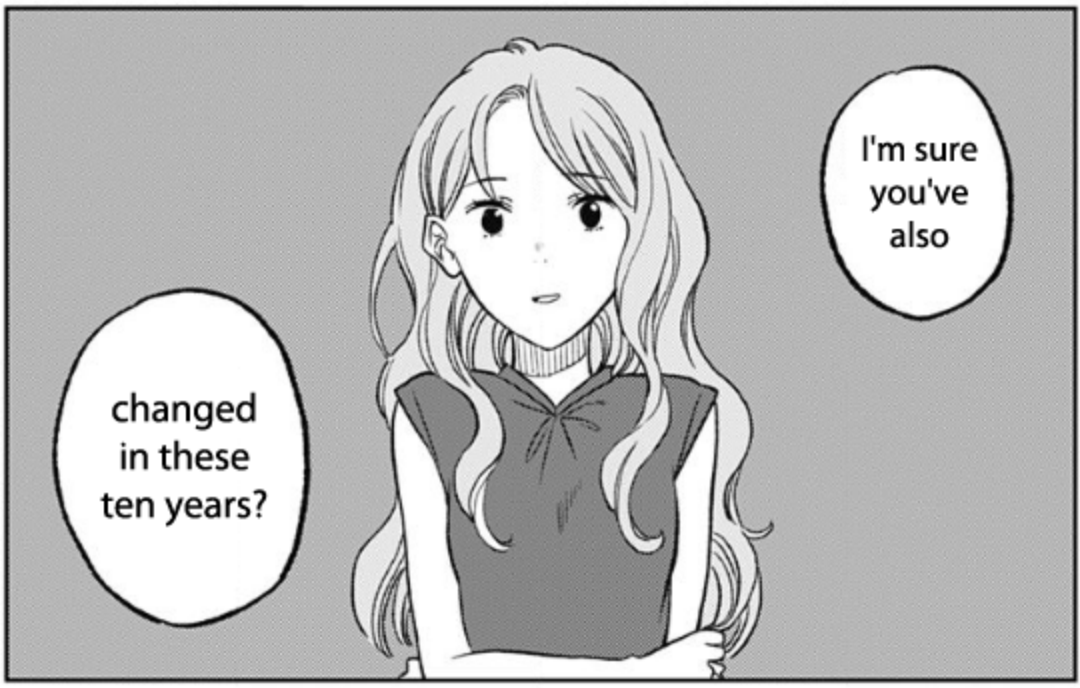
so I messed things up way down to the roots.
I couldn't stand the slightest imperfection,
Ultimately,
I suppose I was childish.

when I changed schools and left you.
It seems my mind's never changed
ever since that summer ten years ago,

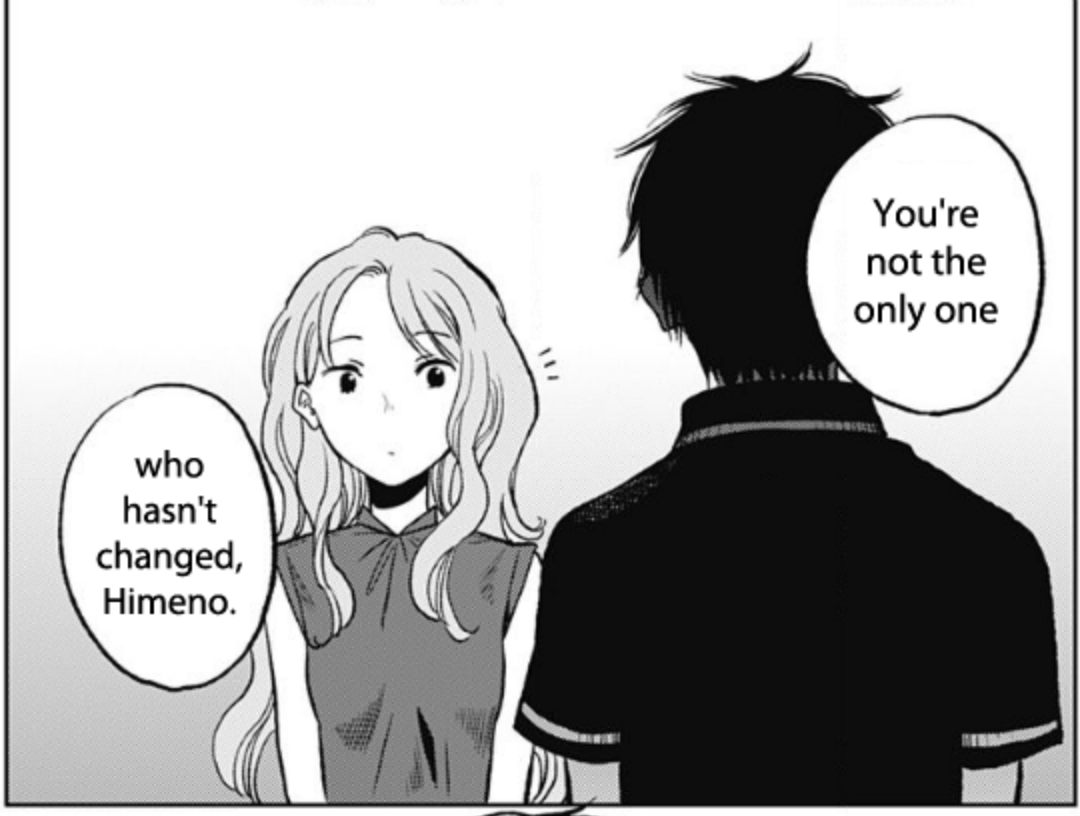

...I'm sure that ten years ago,
I was a reasonably smart girl.
But I suppose as a result,
it just gave rise to foolish pride deep down,
the notion I didn't need to mature any further.


And so I'm still not much different from that ten-year-old dreamer,
even while everyone else keeps changing.

So what
about you, Kusunoki?


I'm sure you've also
changed in these ten years?

...
sss...


You're not the only one
who hasn't changed, Himeno.

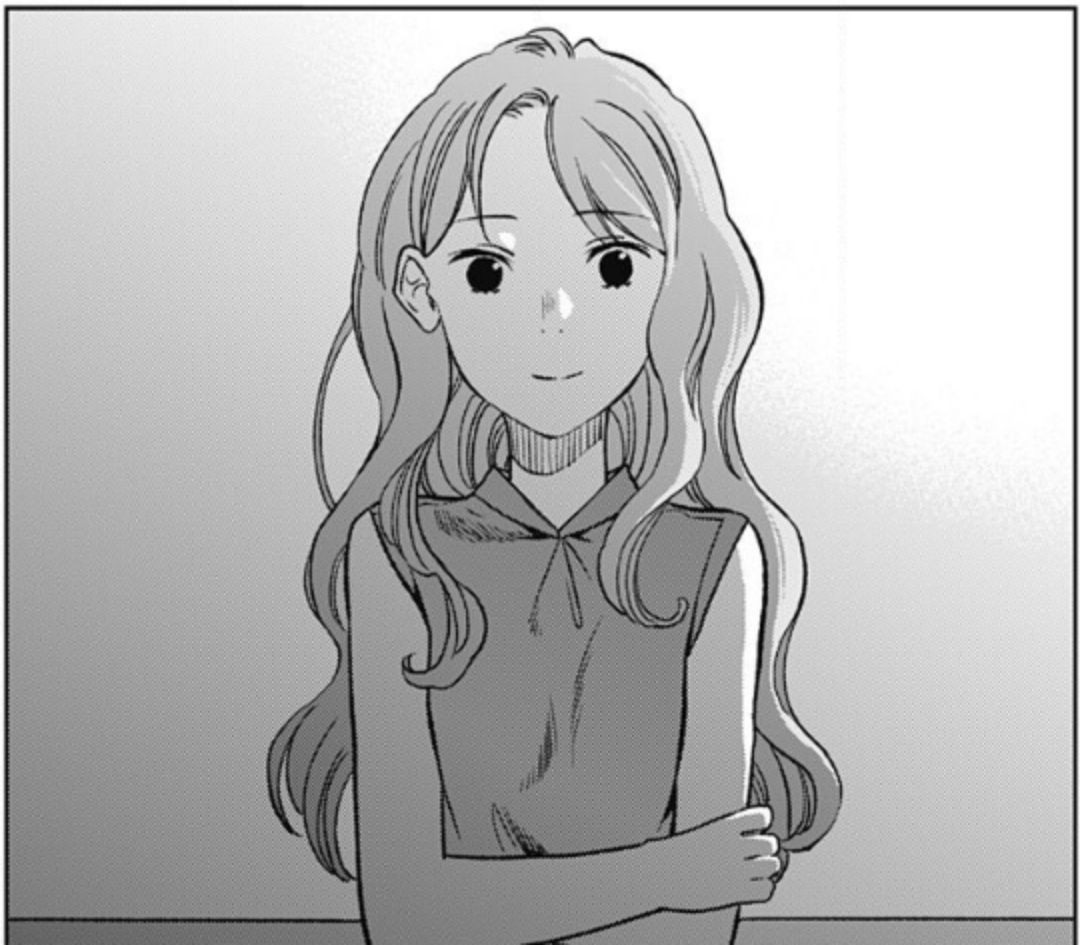
Since the day we parted, I too haven't changed a bit.
Around this point,
I began to lose my calm.

But

That's why, just a few days ago -

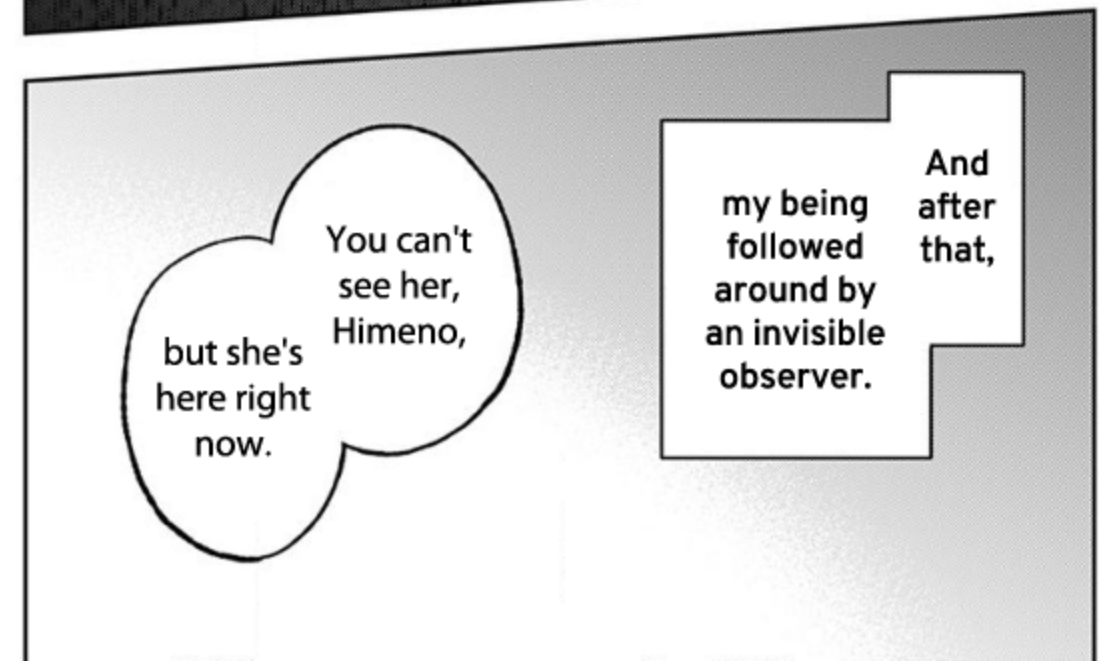
that wouldn't stop me.

...I sold off my lifespan.
For 10,000 yen per year.



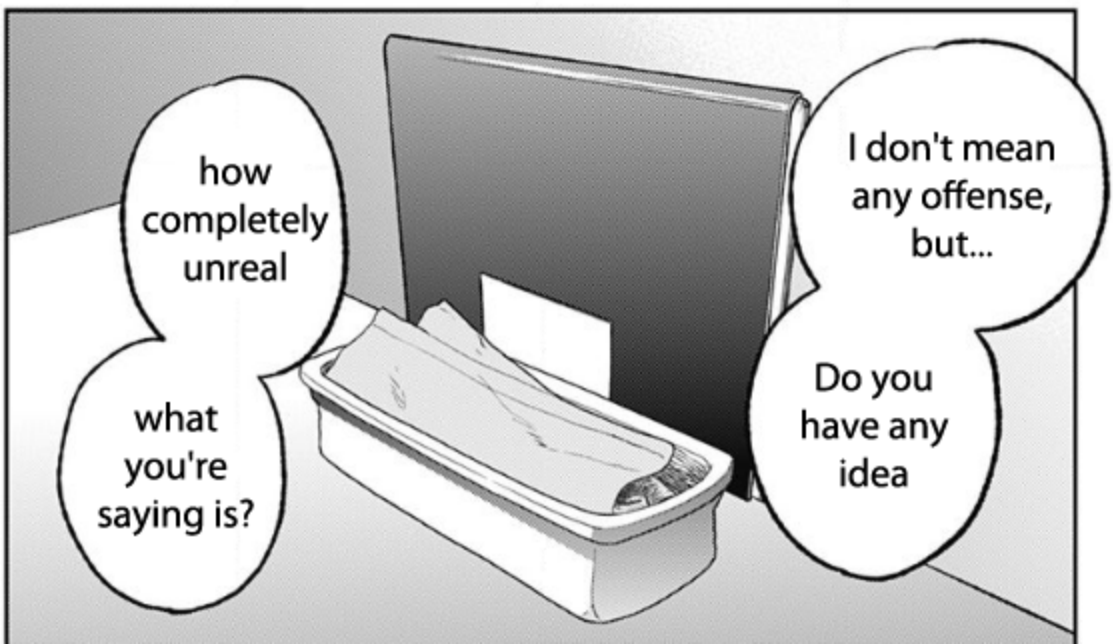
I let the jumbled mess that had built up inside me
out all at once.
I jumped from one topic to another.

The shop that dealed in lifespan.
Despairing over my future
and selling off all but three months of my life.

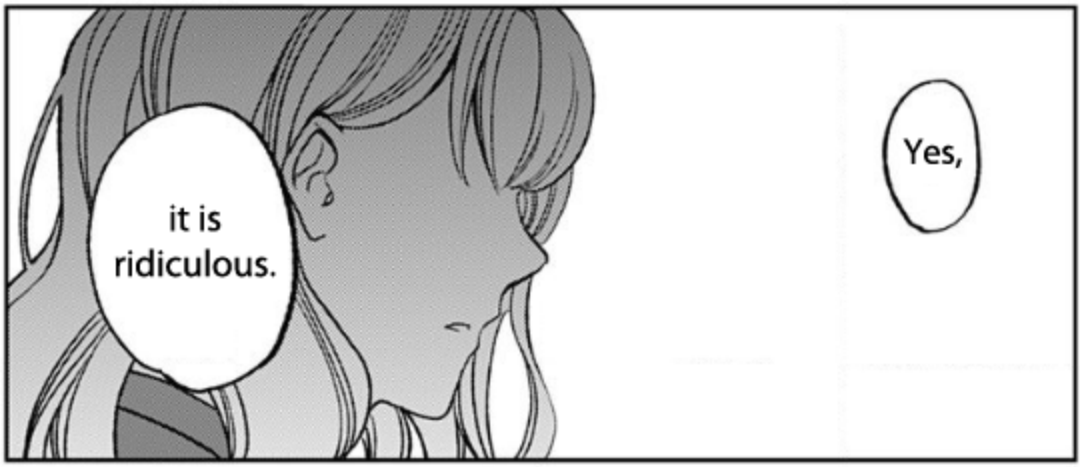

And after that,
my being followed around by an invisible observer.
You can't see her, Himeno,
but she's here right now.

Here, right here.
She's a girl named Miyagi.
And while she speaks in a really blunt way,
if you just talk with her she's actually very...

Hey, Kusunoki?


I don't mean any offense, but...
Do you have any idea
how completely unreal
what you're saying is?

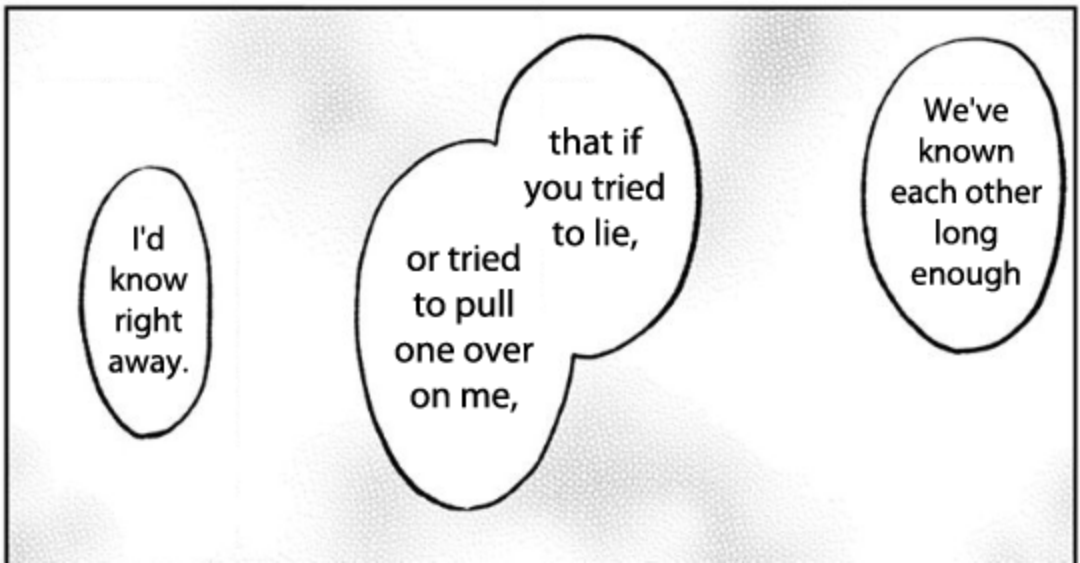
Yeah,
I'm pretty sure I know how ridiculous it sounds.


Yes,
it is ridiculous.

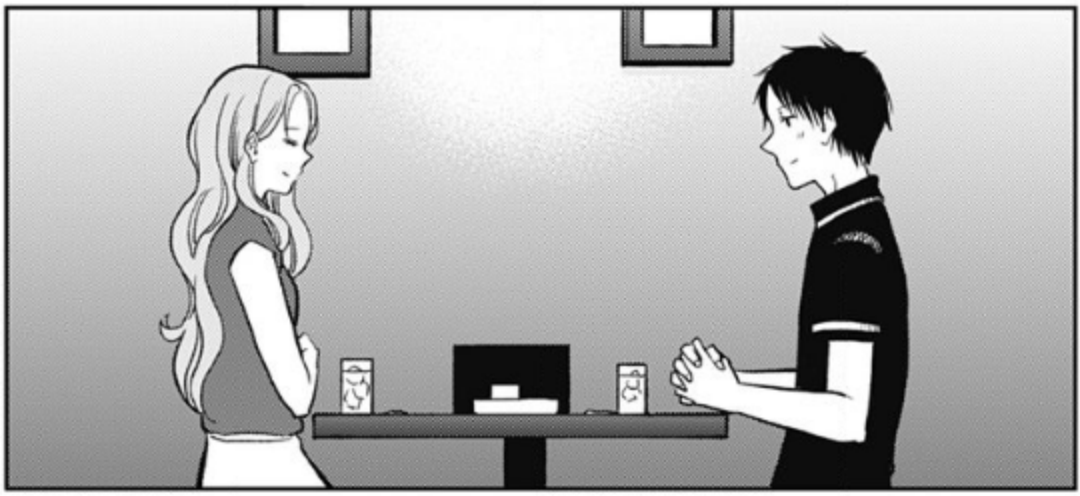
...But you know, Kusu-noki,
despite that,
I just...

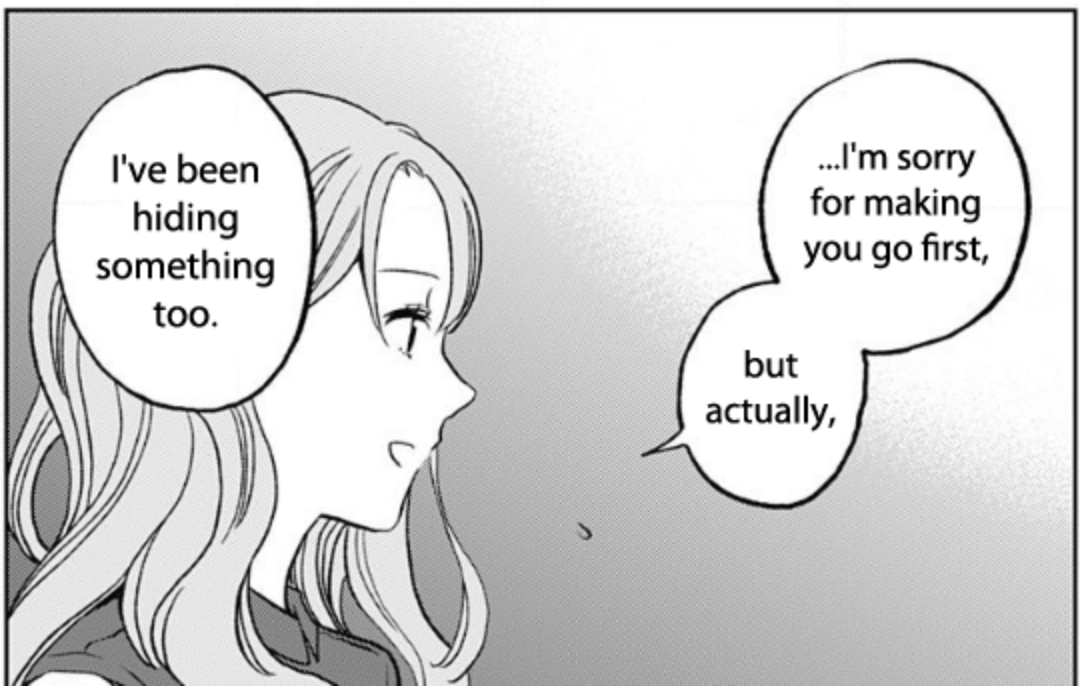
I can't think it's a lie.

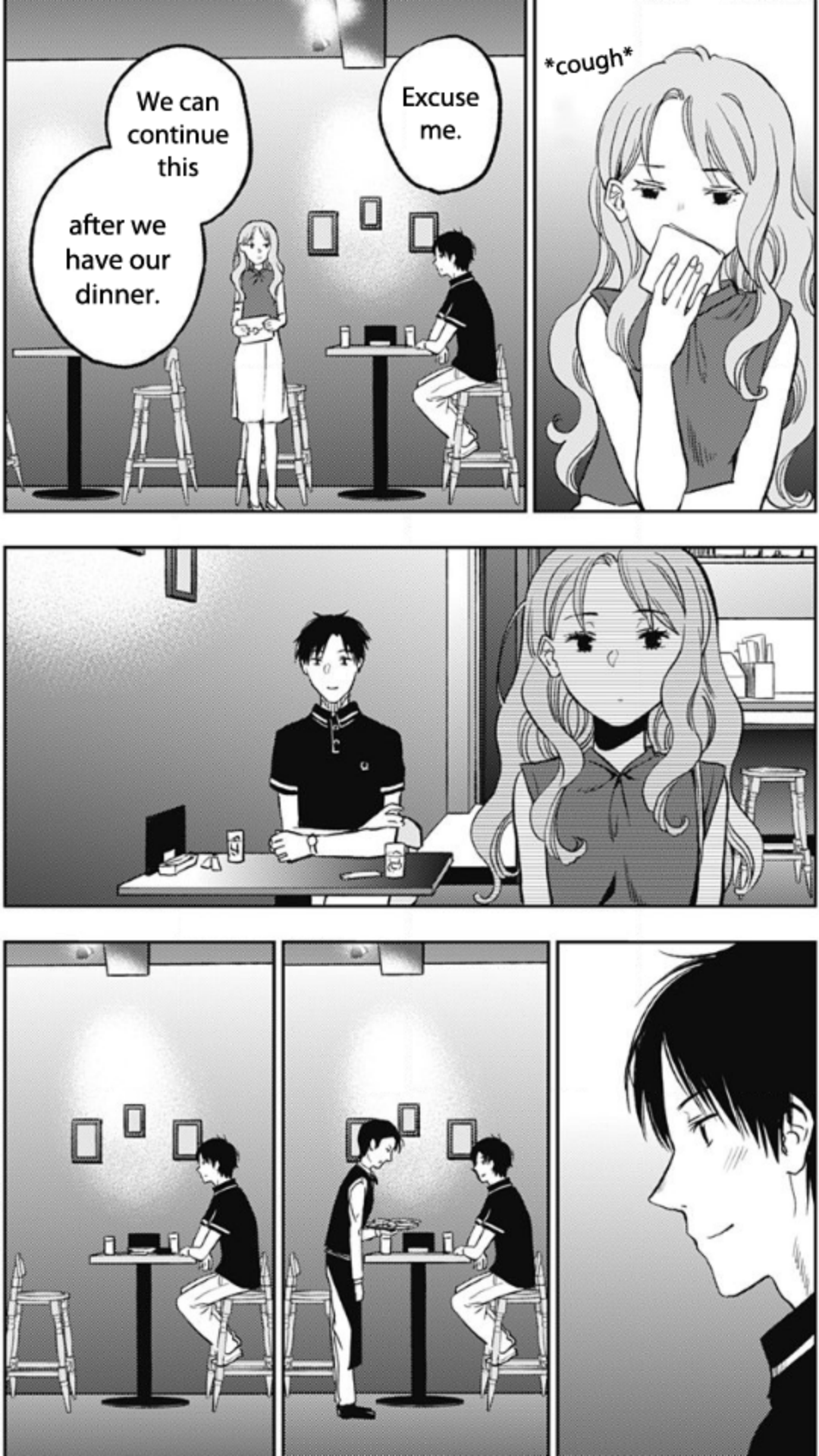
Not the part about having little time left,
nor that there's a girl there obser-ving you.

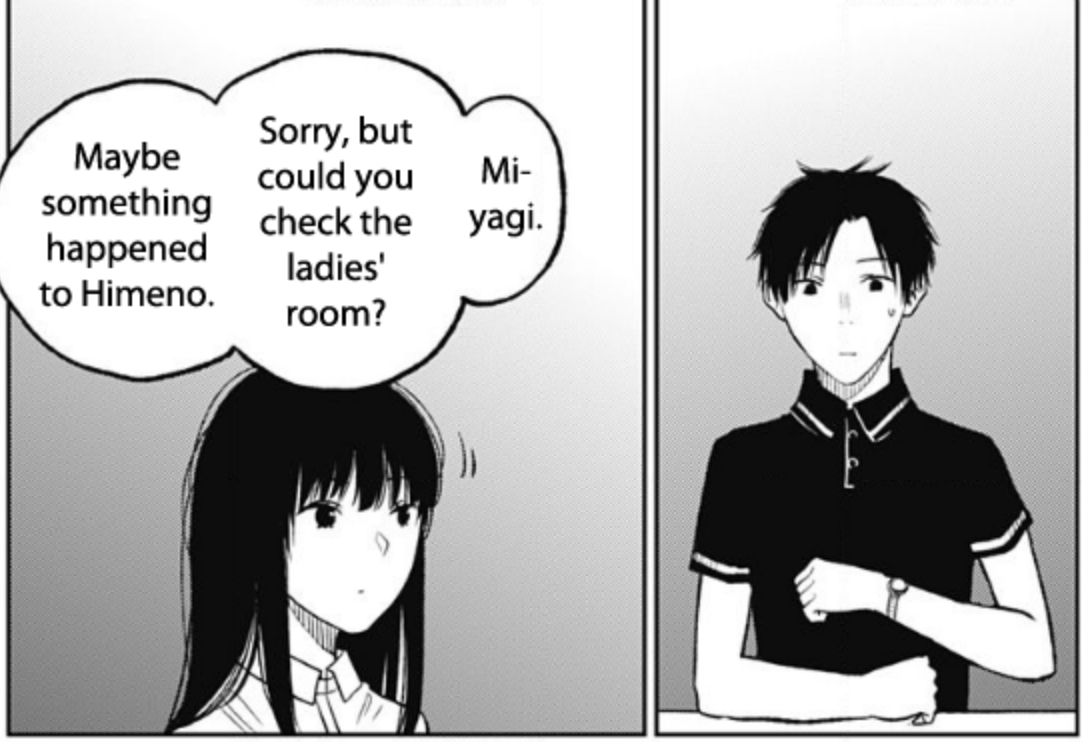

We've known each other long enough
that if you tried to lie,
or tried to pull one over on me,
I'd know right away.

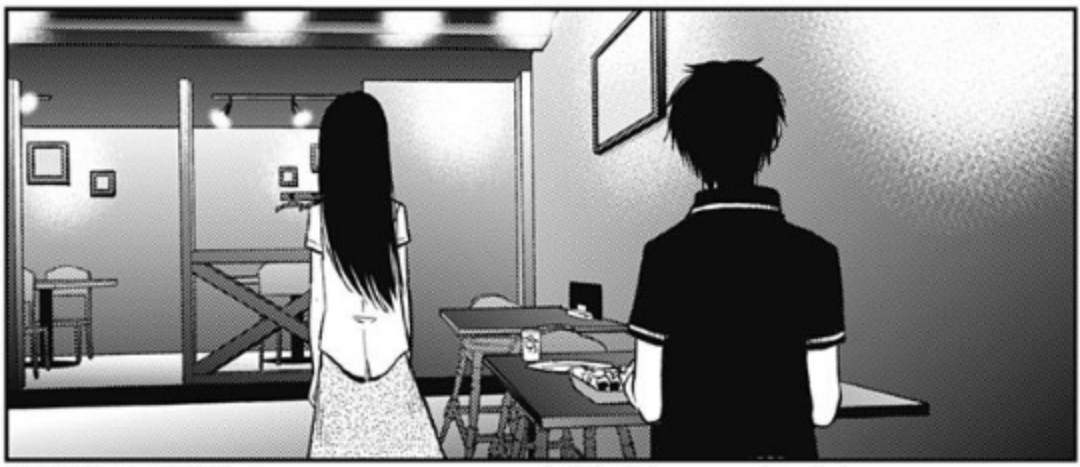
So while it's certainly hard to swallow,
I can believe that
you're not lying
about selling your lifespan.




...I'm sorry for making you go first,
but actually,
I've been hiding something too.

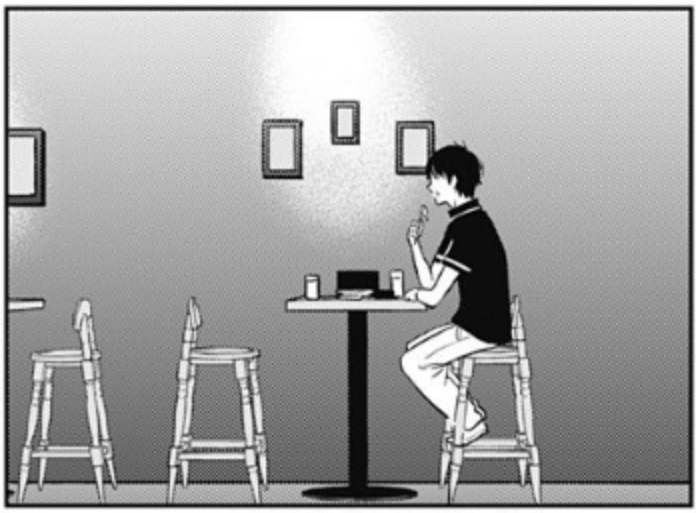

Excuse me.
We can continue this after we have our dinner.
cough

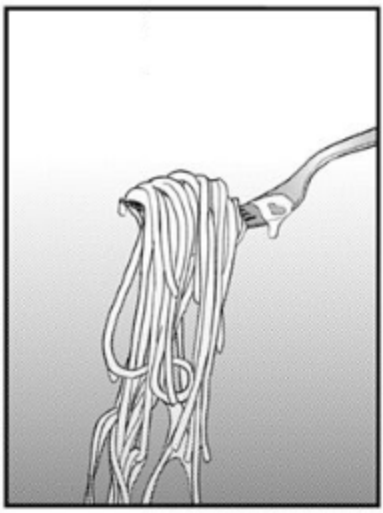




Himeno never came back.

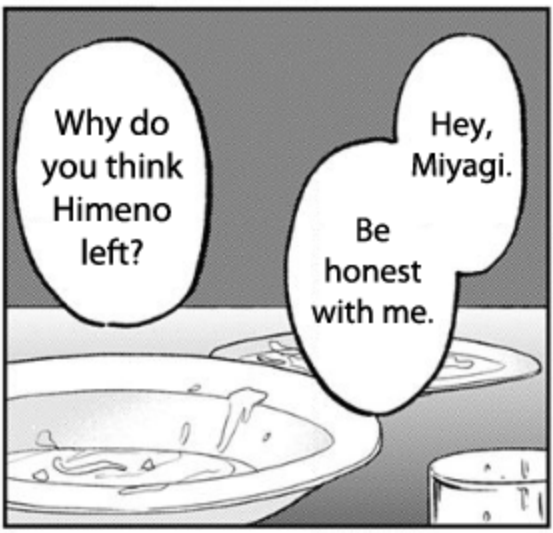
I returned to my seat in defeat.
I walked around the restaurant, but she was nowhere to be found.





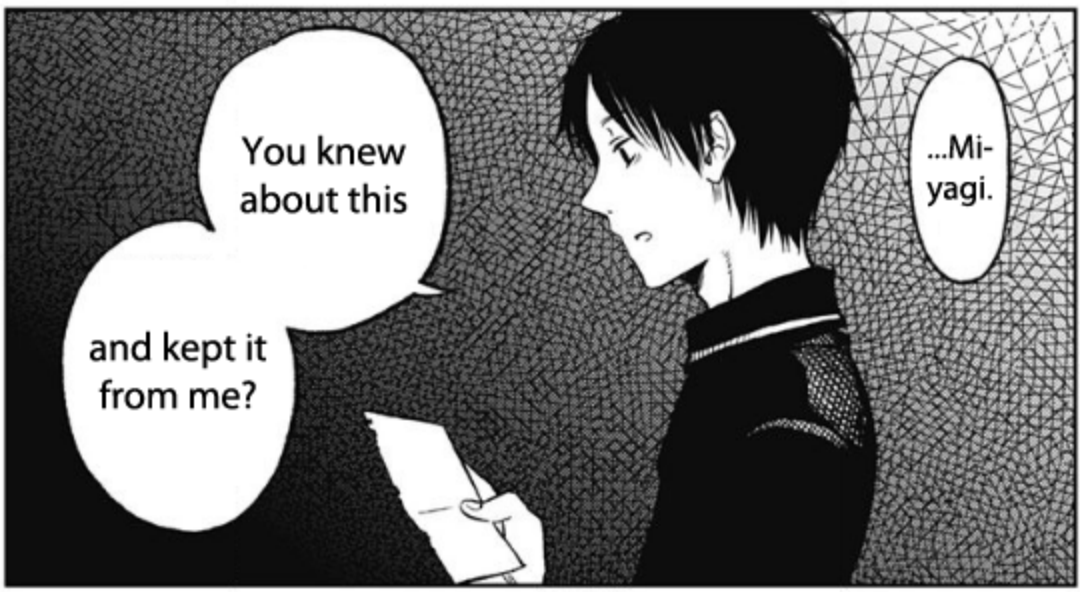
Quite tasty even when it's cold.

Per-haps
because she thought you were insane.


Why do you think Himeno left?
Hey, Miyagi.
Be honest with me.

And she hid it,
for my sake.
But the truth was a little more compli-cated,
and Miyagi knew that too.

Your companion asked me to give you this.
Sir!


You knew about this and kept it from me?
...Miyagi.

You let me have a good dream.
No need to apologize.
I did. I'm sorry.

Himeno would've succeeded in her objective.
Is that right?
And in my original life,

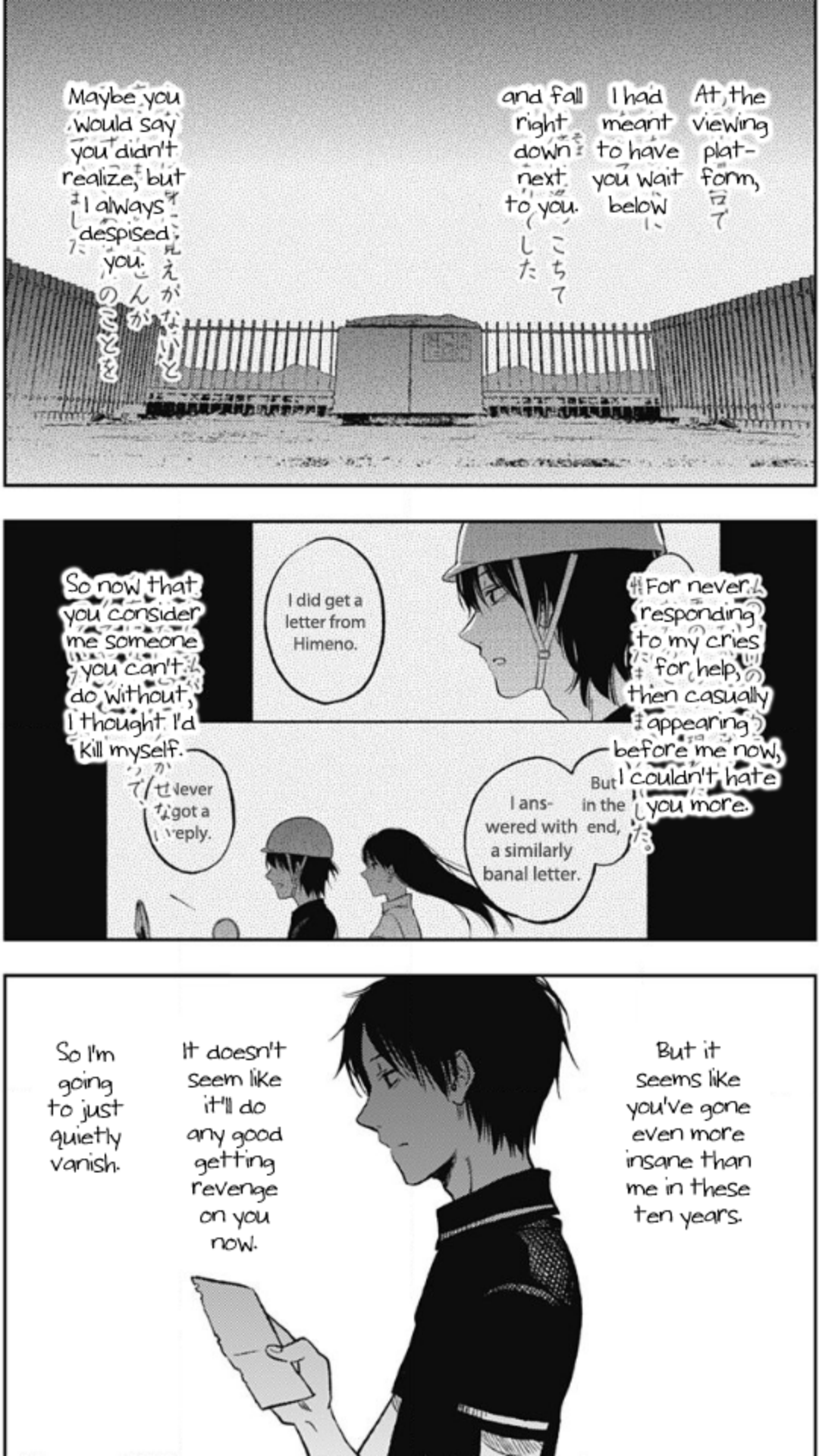
Ms. Himeno would have...
done it right before your eyes, Mr. Kusunoki.

Correct.

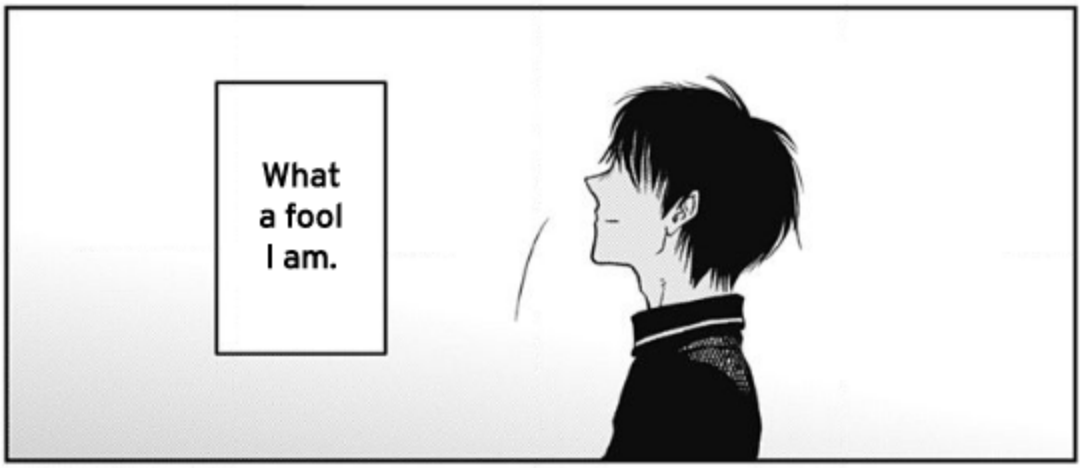
To clear up years of resent-ment.
To show it to me.

I had intended to die right in front of you.

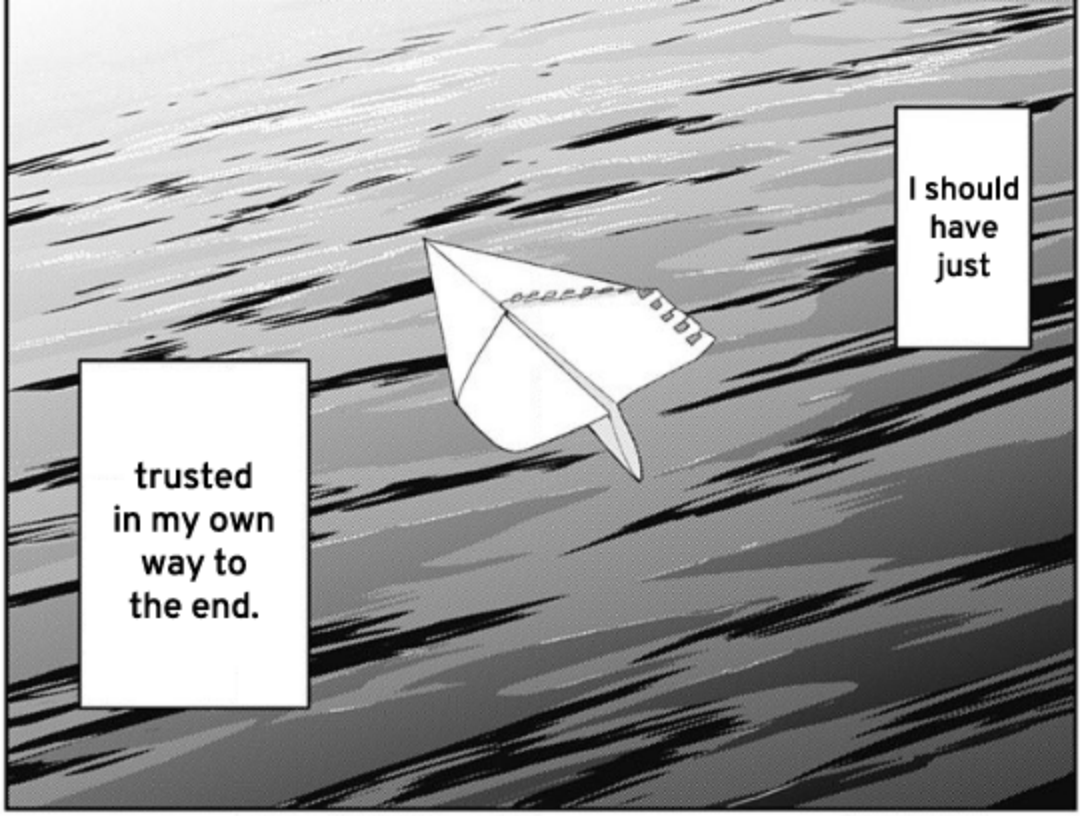
To my one and only childhood friend.

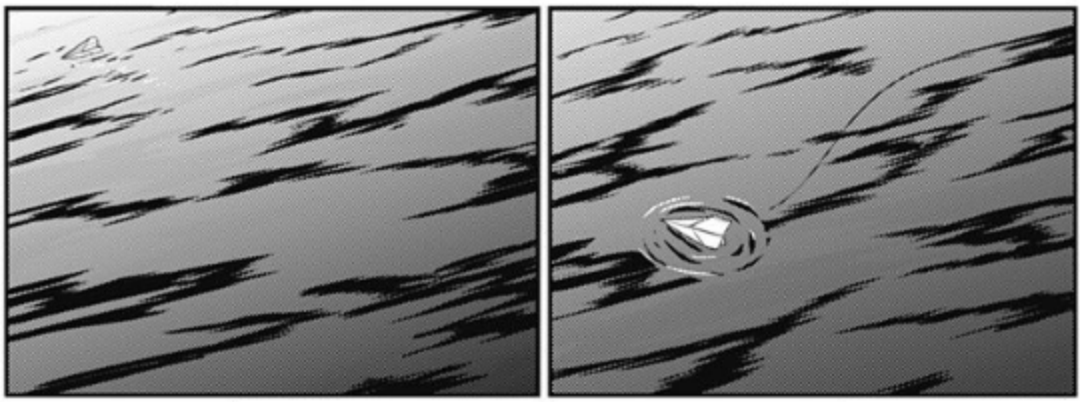

At the viewing platform,
I had meant to have you wait below
and fall right down next to you.
Maybe you would say you didn't realize, but I always despised you.
For never responding to my cries for help, then casually appearing before me now, I couldn't hate you more.
But in the end, I answered with a similarly banal letter.
I did get a letter from Himeno.
So now that you consider me someone you can't do without, I thought I'd kill myself.
Never got a reply.
But it seems like you've gone even more insane than me in these ten years.
It doesn't seem like it'll do any good getting revenge on you now.
So I'm going to just quietly vanish.

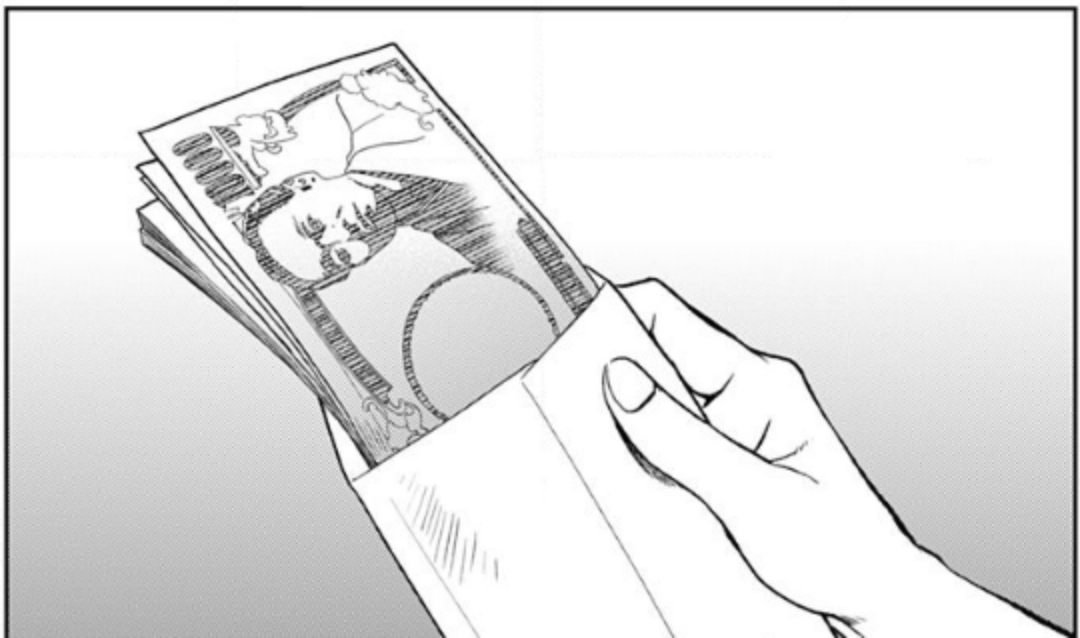
I only hope that what you said about having little time left to live is true.
そはがを
Good-bye.
なら。

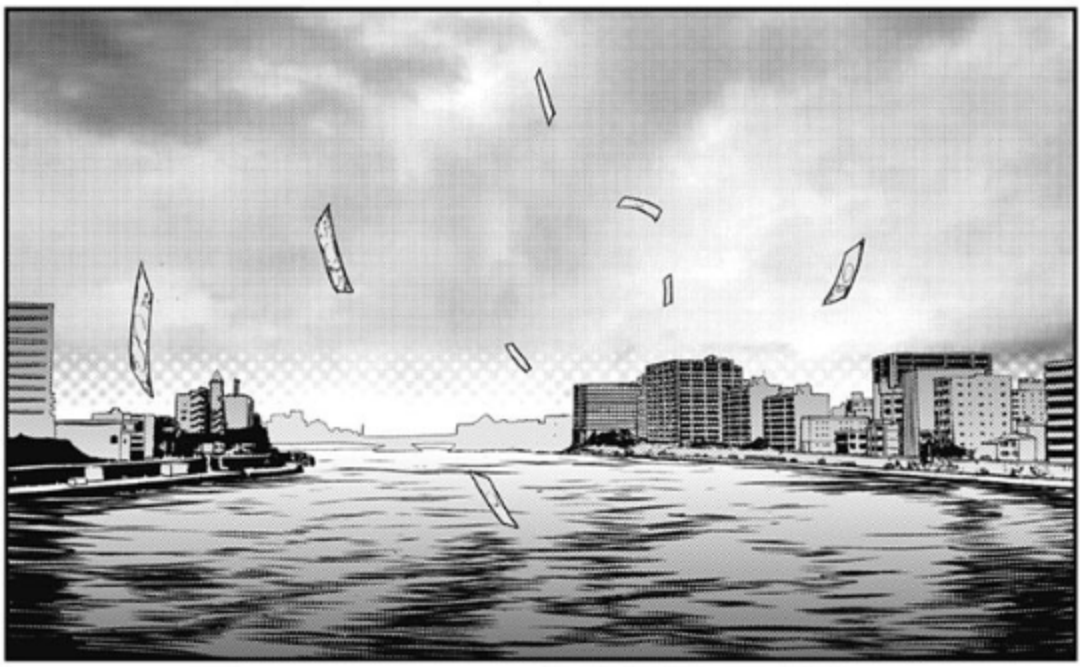

What a fool I am.

to avoid feeling like this.
I'd lived alone all my life


I should have just
trusted in my own way to the end.







You'll be dren-ched.
As you can see,
I'm in a getting-drenched mood.
...Is that right.

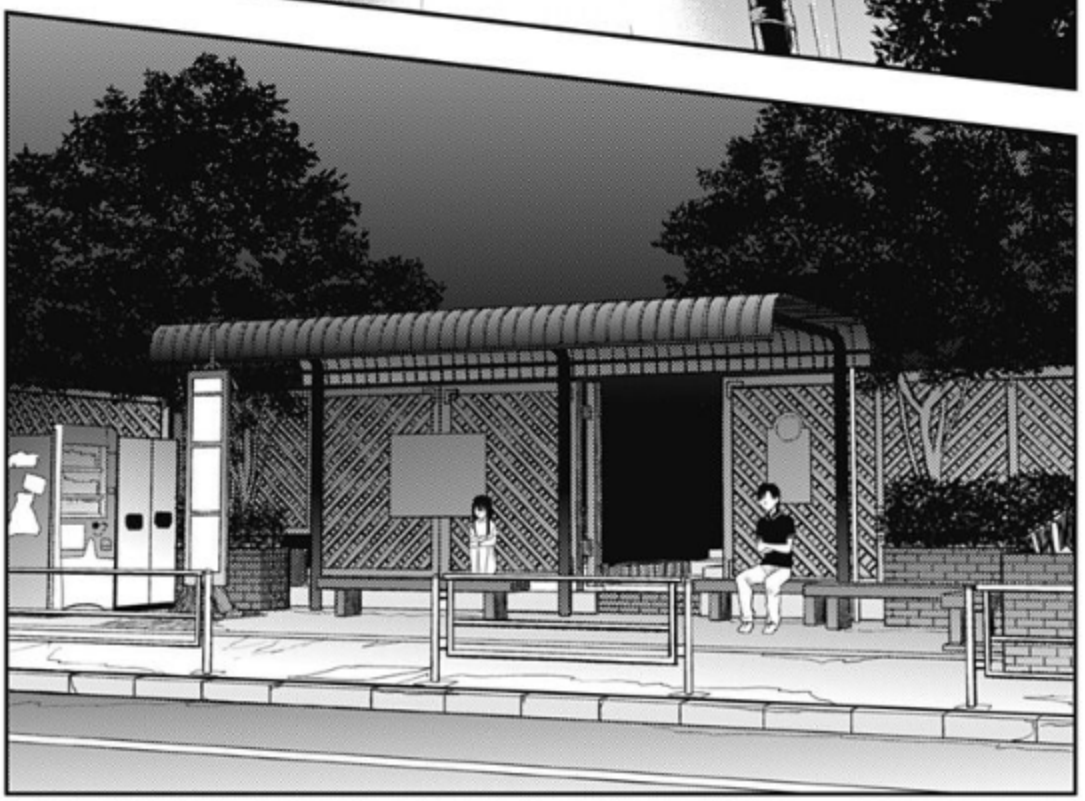
As you can see,
I am in a getting-drenched mood.
You don't have to get drenched, you know.

寿命を買い取ってもらった。一年につき、一万円で。

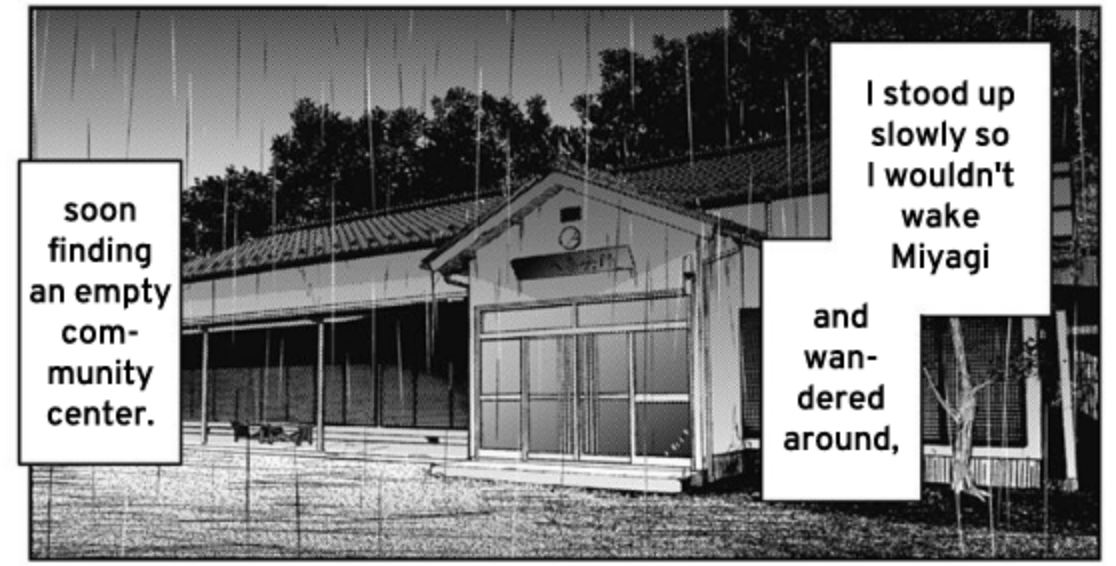
I Sold Off My Lifespan, For 10,000 Yen A Year.

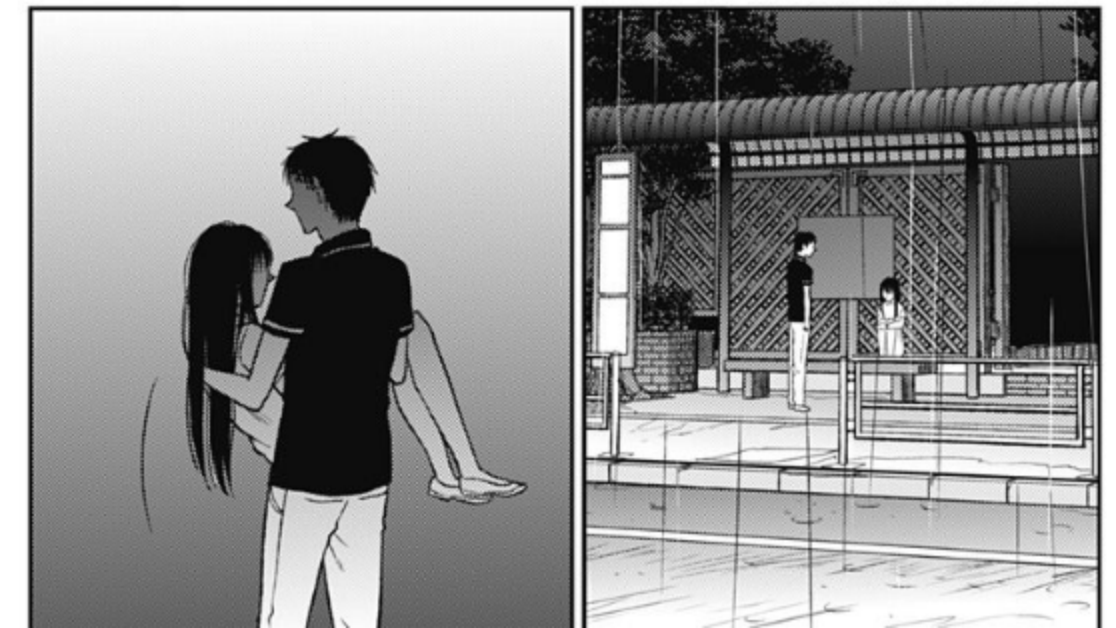
Chapter 10

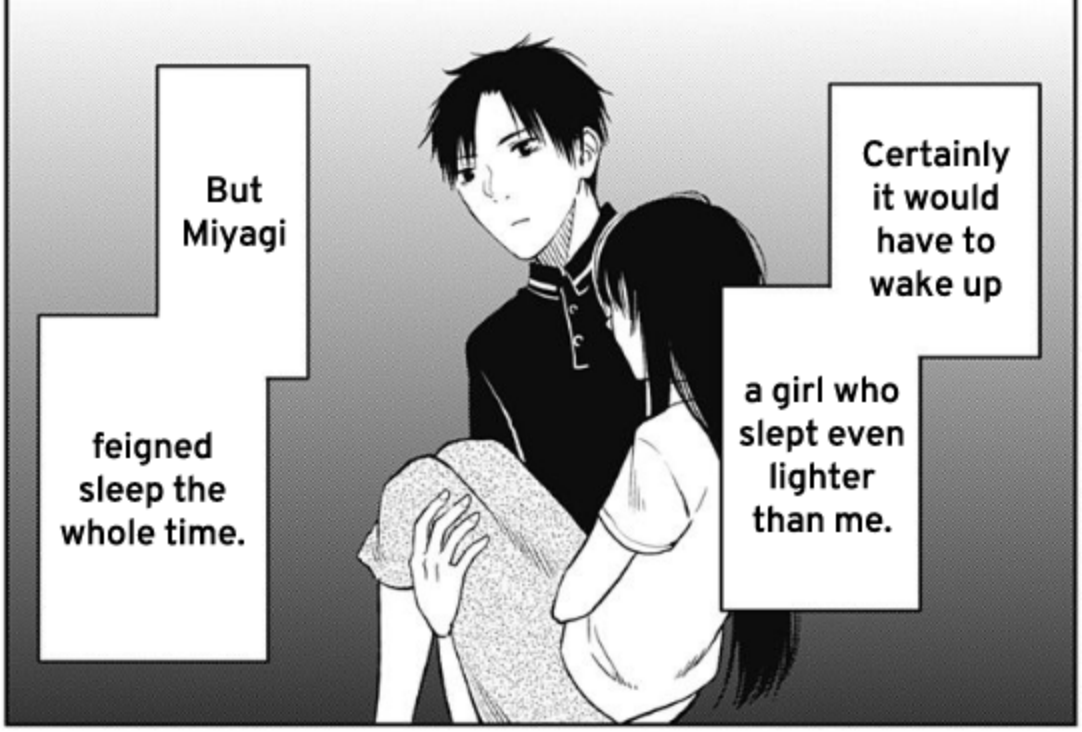
Original: Sugaru Miaki **Manga:** Shoichi Taguchi
("Three Days of Happiness" from Media Works Bunko)
Character Design: E9L / Shoichi Taguchi

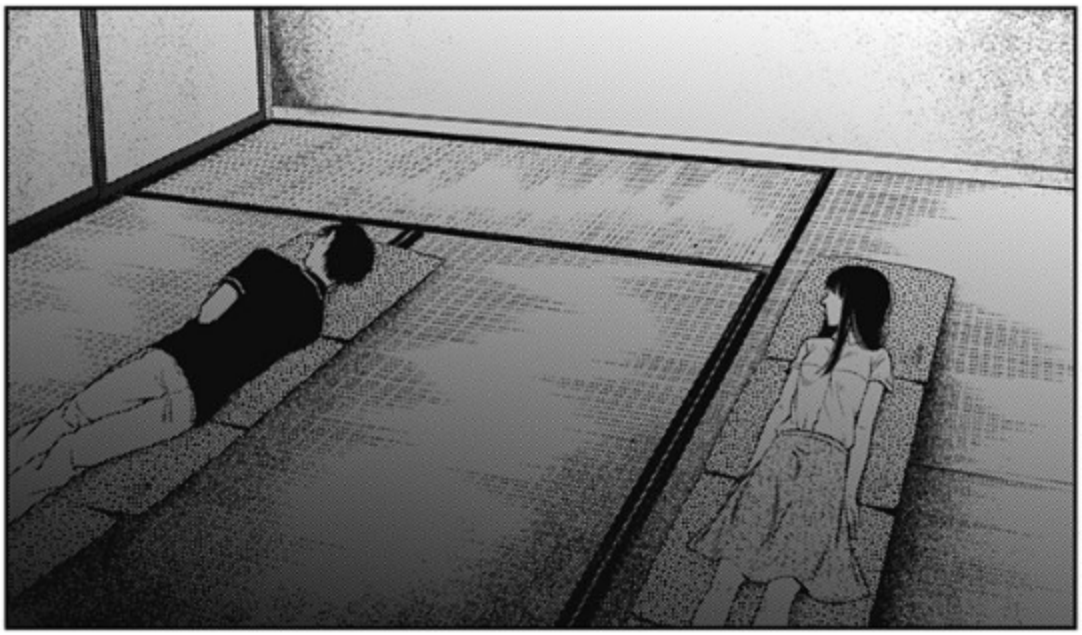


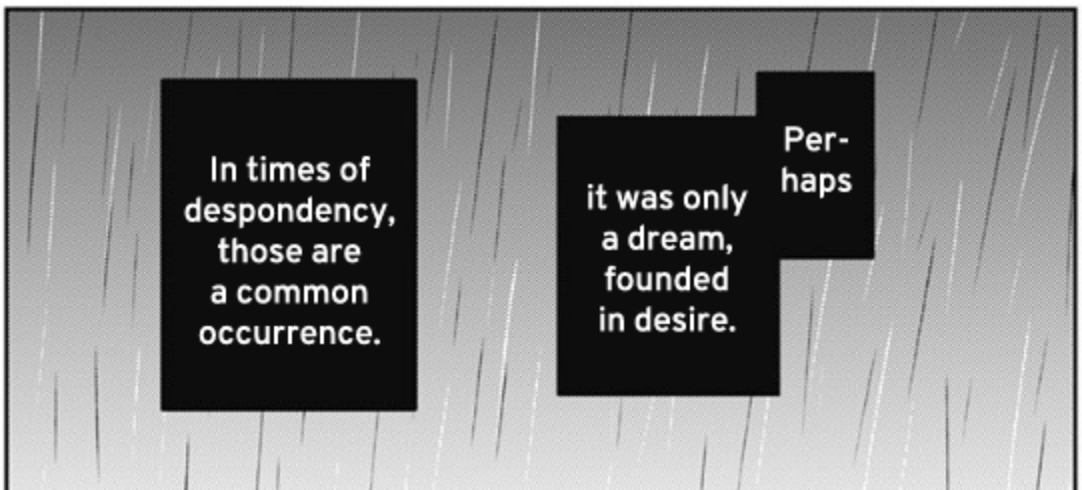
Seeing Miyagi hold her knees, trying to stay warm and sleep,
I pitied her for having to deal with the selfish actions
of an idiot like me.

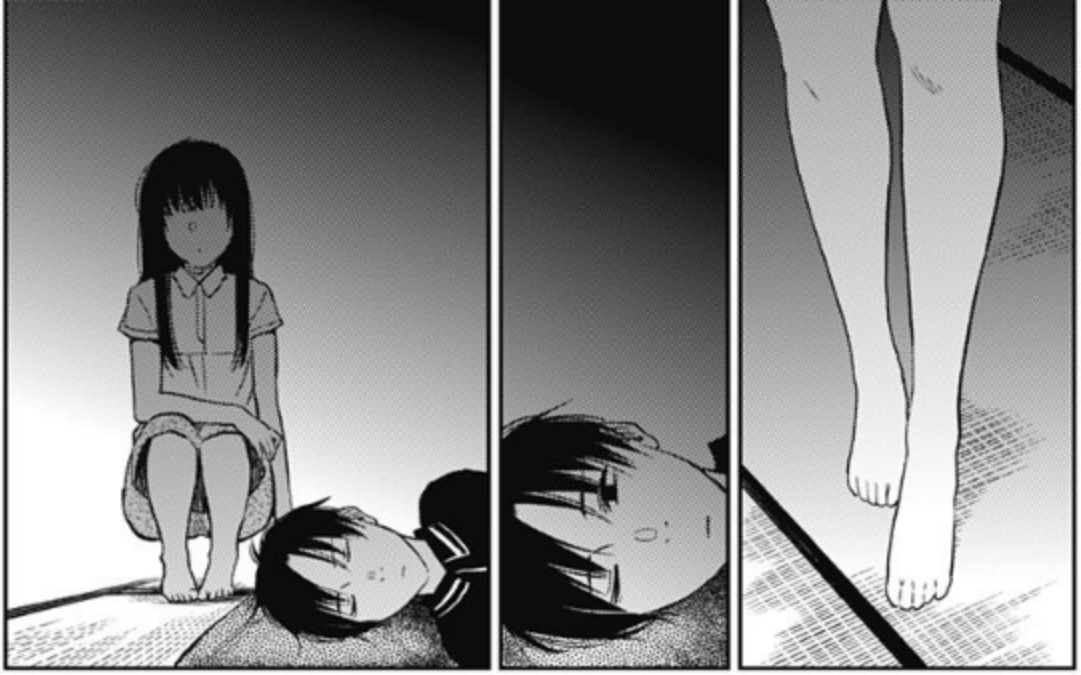

I stood up slowly so I wouldn't wake Miyagi
and wandered around,
soon finding an empty community center.




But Miyagi
feigned sleep the whole time.
Certainly it would have to wake up
a girl who slept even lighter than me.



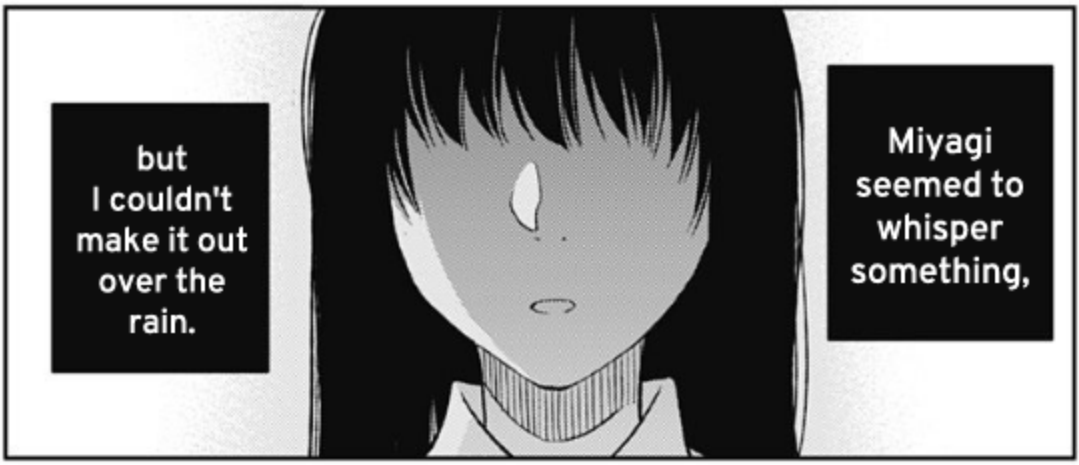

In times of despondency, those are a common occurrence.
it was only a dream, founded in desire.
Per-haps



I don't think it lasted any more than a minute.

Even in summer, she smelled like a clear winter morning.

I knew it was Miyagi because of her smell.



In my drowsiness, I thought:

Just how much
has Miyagi helped me?

How cornered would I feel now
if Miyagi weren't there?

I'll just die quietly.

I'll go back to my usual,
self-sufficient, modest life where
I don't count on anyone for anything.

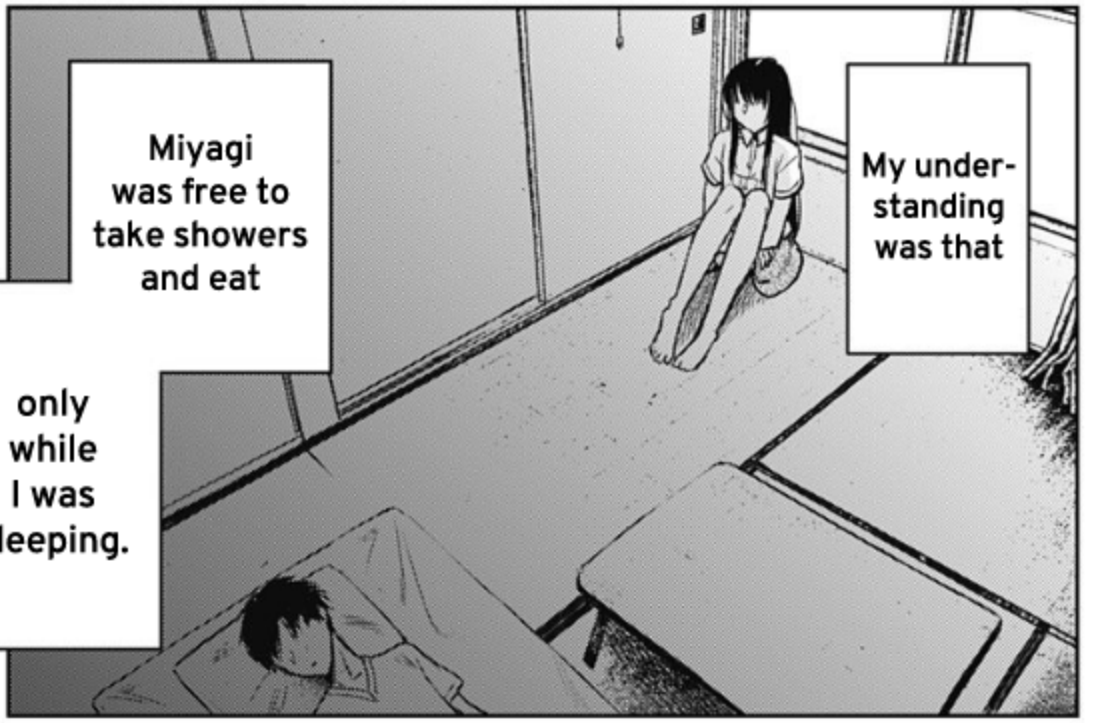
Like a cat,
I'll expire silently and in secret.

So I secretly vowed.

In the morn-ing,
after a 4-hour trek from the community center,
we finally reached the apartment.

My body was dren-ched in sweat
and my feet were blistered.
The shower ...

I'll try to get out quick, at least...
"You go in first"?
...Nah, she'd probably just refuse...


Miyagi was free to take showers and eat
only while I was sleeping.
My under-standing was that

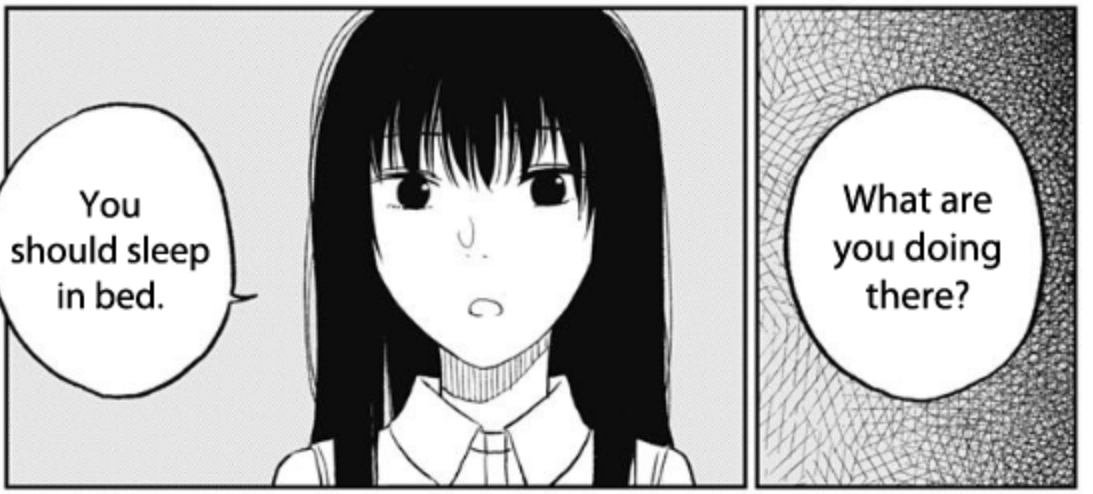
スッ

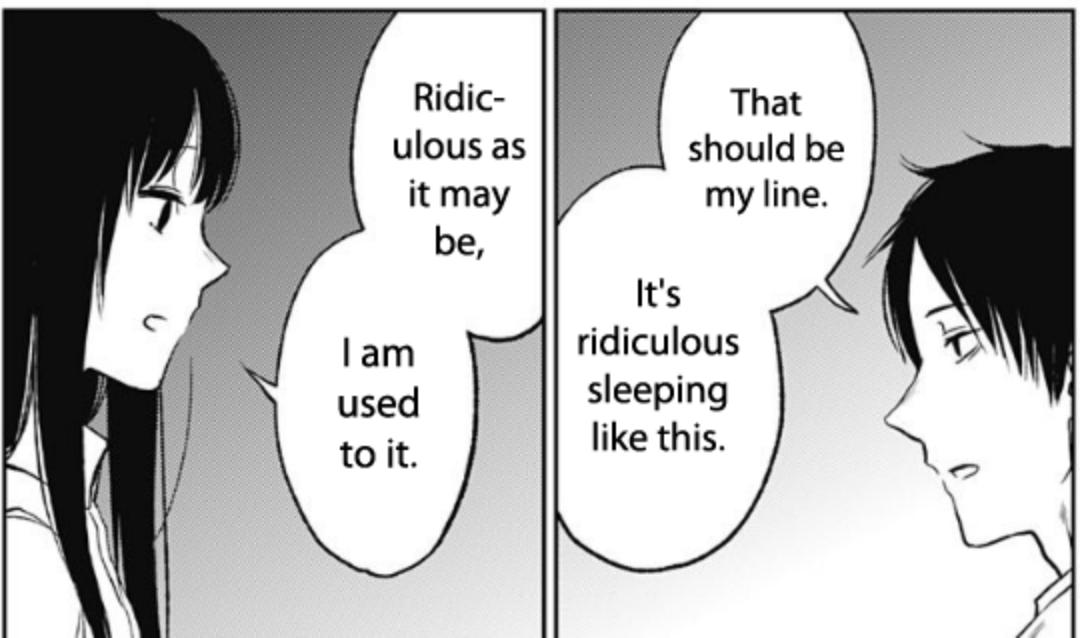
Mr. Kusu-noki.
Mr. Kusunoki, are you sleeping?
I ask, of course,
because you appear to be feigning sleep.

And, if you are indeed, I would like to say...
If you did so out of concern for me, it'd be nice.
...Good night.
I'll be using your shower.

shut

Just as an experiment, I tried imitating the way Miyagi slept.
But as long as I sat there,
sleep just wouldn't come.

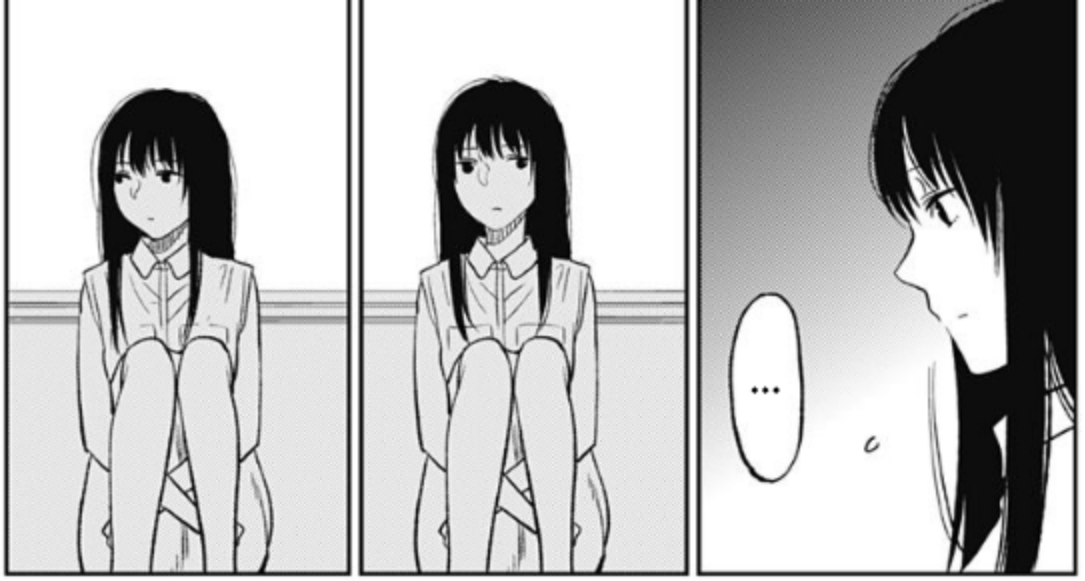

What are you doing there?
You should sleep in bed.

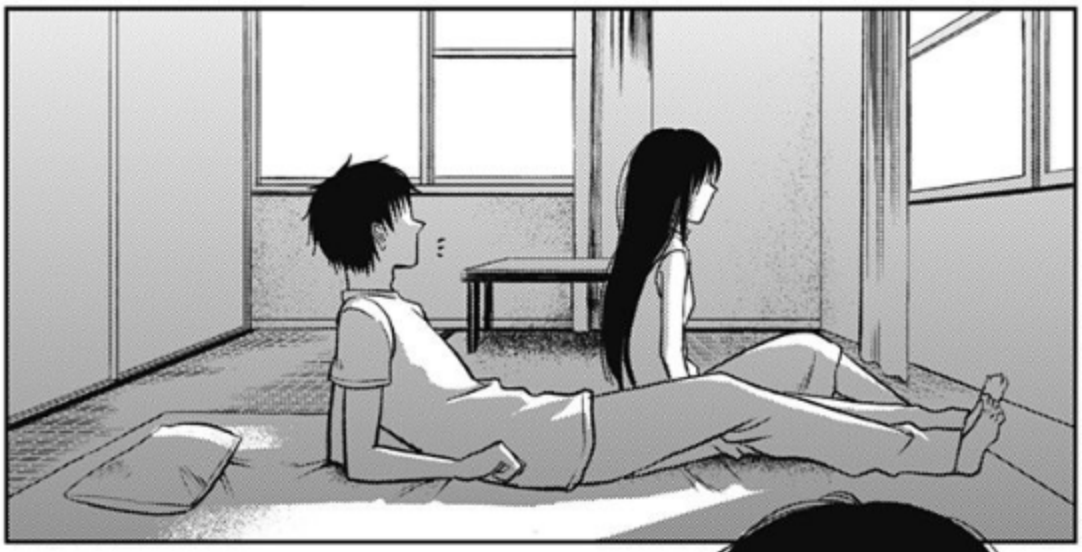

That should be my line.
It's ridiculous sleeping like this.
Ridic-ulous as it may be,
I am used to it.

I'm sleeping on the left side from now on.

Would be a perfect place for you to observe me up close.
No matter what, I won't intrude on the right side, won't even look.

Are you still half-asleep, Mr. Kusunoki?
It's up to you if you want to use it or not, but I'll sleep on the left at any rate.



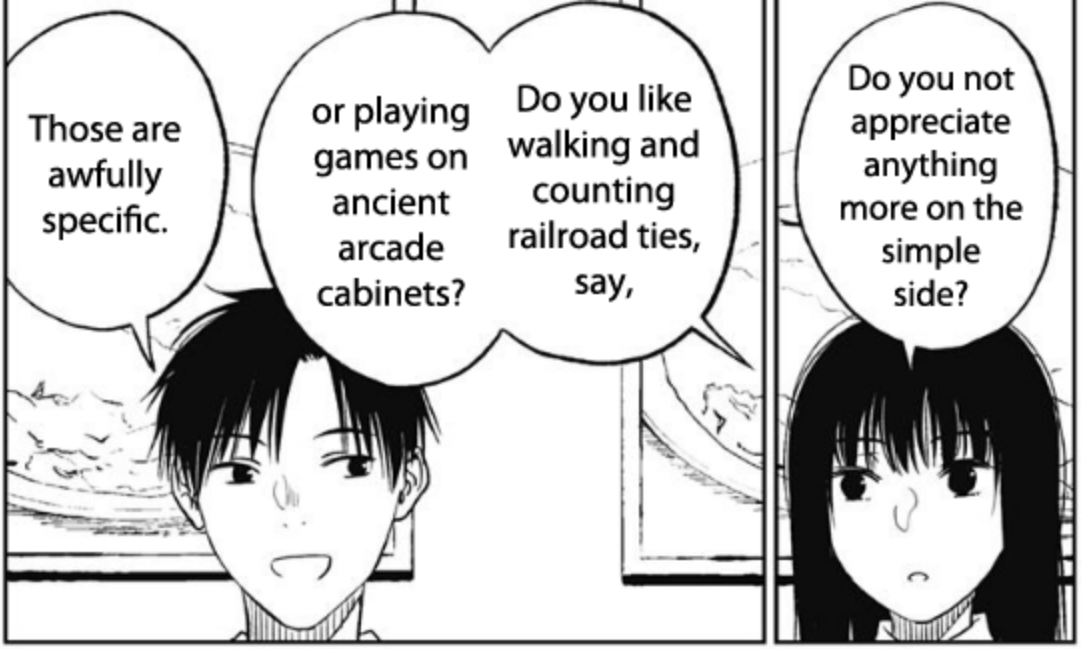


I was just a little tired today, you see.
From tomor-row on,
I'll sleep in my usual spot.

But
thank you very much.

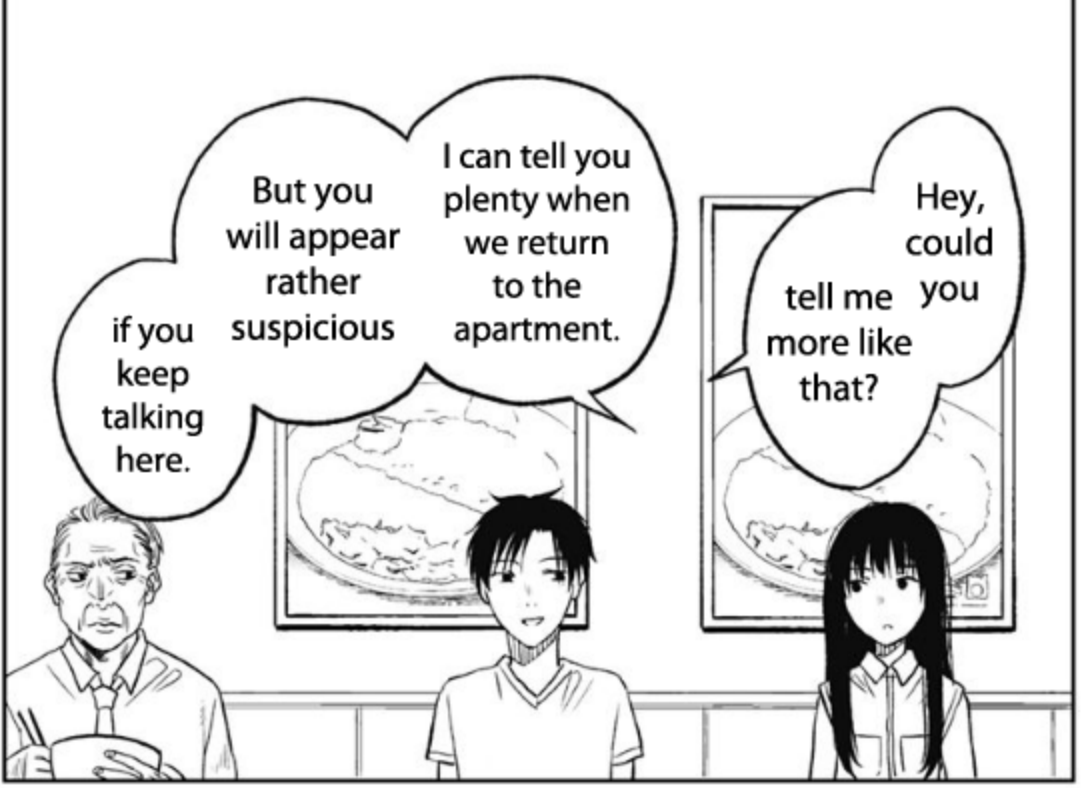
At the ATM,
I with-drew the last of my part-time money.

So now what?
I've done everything on my Things to Do Before I Die list.
Running out of things to do.
they were listening to music and reading.
Yeah,
Do whatever you like.
Even you must have hobbies of some sort, yes?
I don't find them as necessary as before.
to force myself to keep going,
Now that there's no longer a need
"means by which to keep living."
...But now that I think about it,
those two were just


Those are awfully specific.
or playing games on ancient arcade cabinets?
Do you like walking and counting railroad ties, say,
Do you not appreciate anything more on the simple side?

There was even one who spent his last month of life
lying in the back of a pickup truck and looking up at the sky.
Yes.
Let me guess, you observed guys like that?

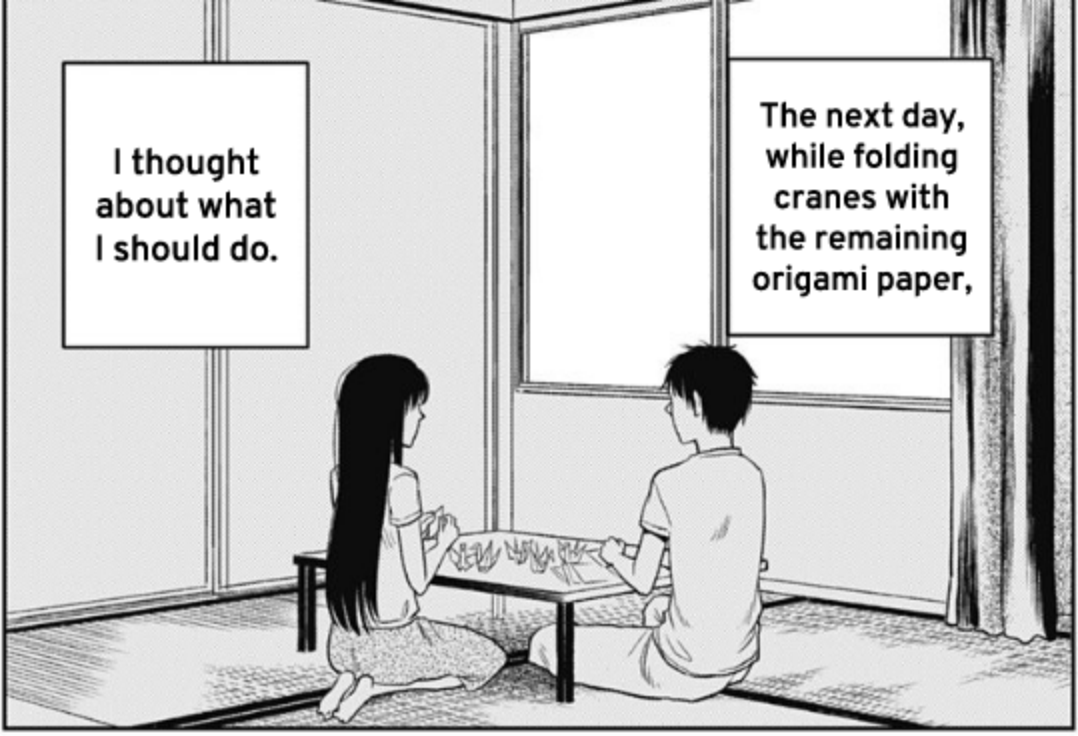
It's a fresh feeling, watching the scenery fly backward.
A rather nice way to pass the time.



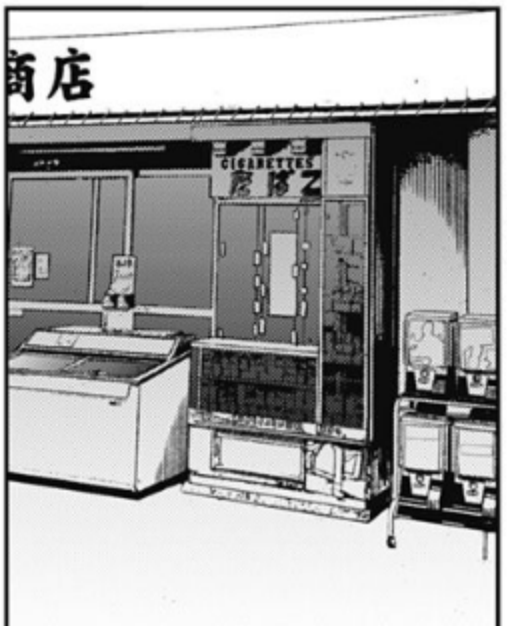
No matter how stupid or pointless the story,

when it came from Miyagi's lips,

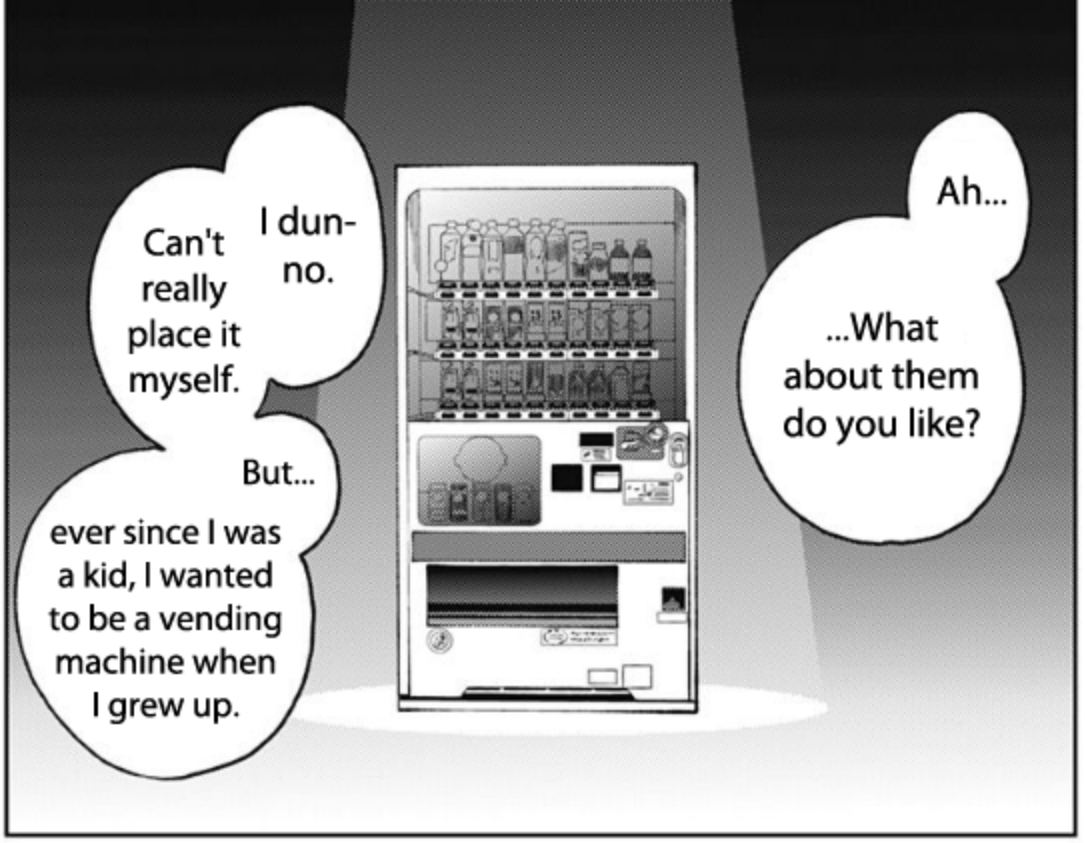
it felt very warm and soothing.

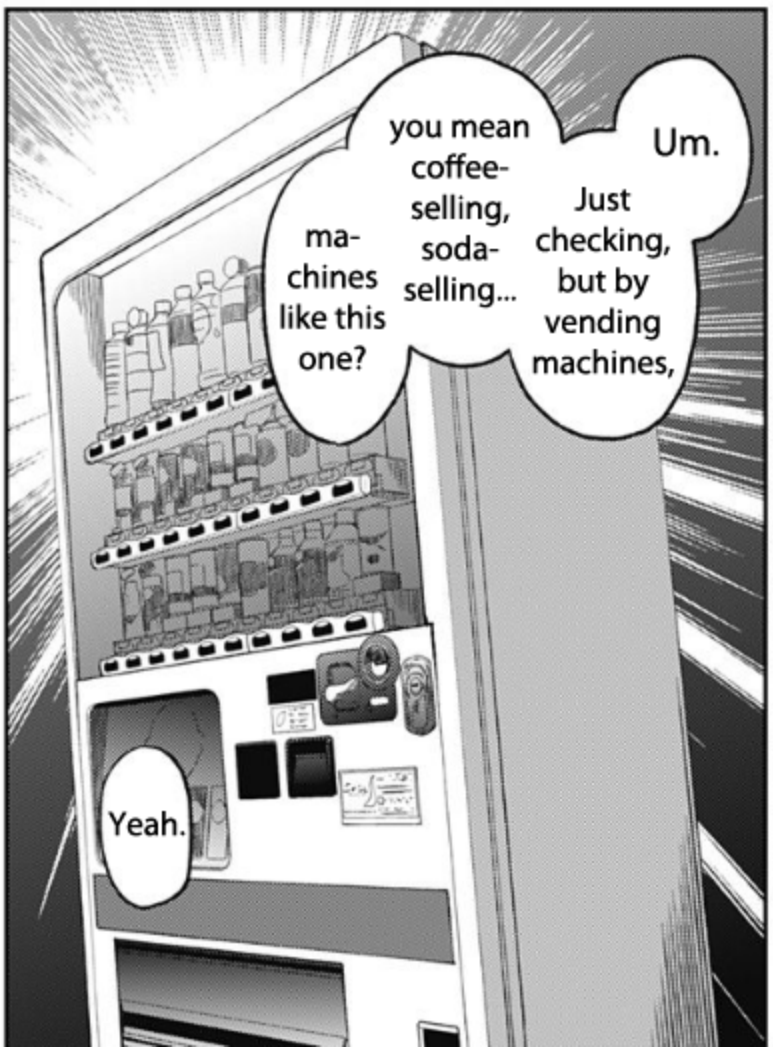

I thought about what I should do.
The next day, while folding cranes with the remaining origami paper,

Yeah, wouldn't really mind just drowning in paper cranes.
may not be so bad either.
Simply keeping on like this

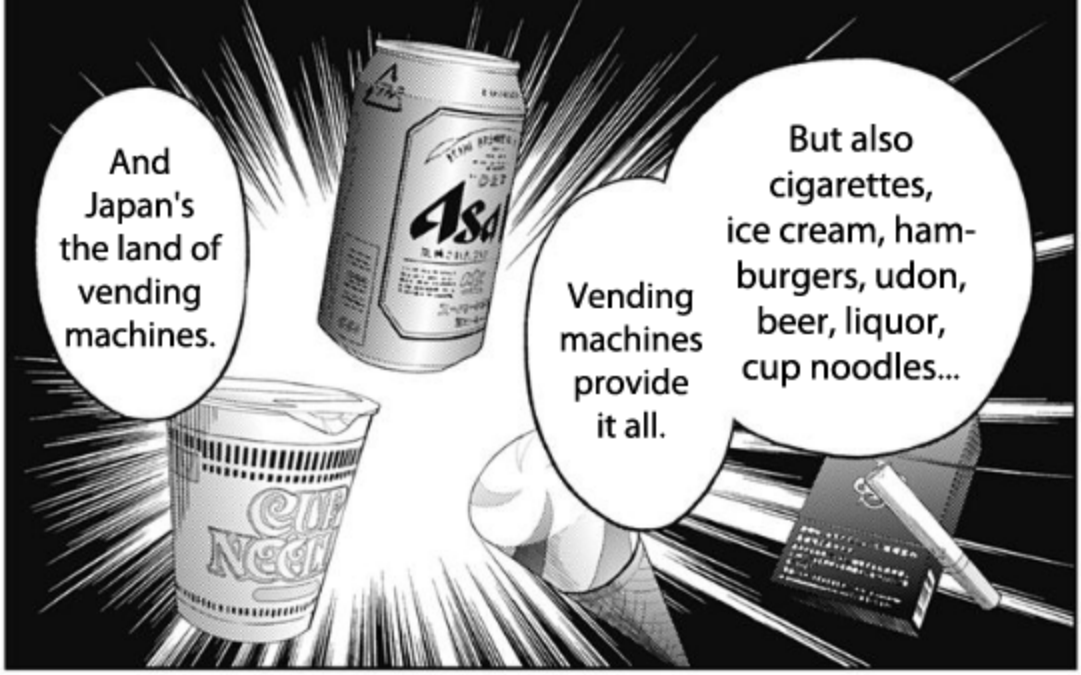

商店
CIGARETTES

Oh...
What is it?
Um.
It's really stupid, but...
I just remembered something that I can really, truly say I like.
...
Then please, say it.
I love vending machines.
CIGARETTES


Ah...
...What about them do you like?
I dun-no.
Can't really place it myself.
But...
ever since I was a kid, I wanted to be a vending machine when I grew up.

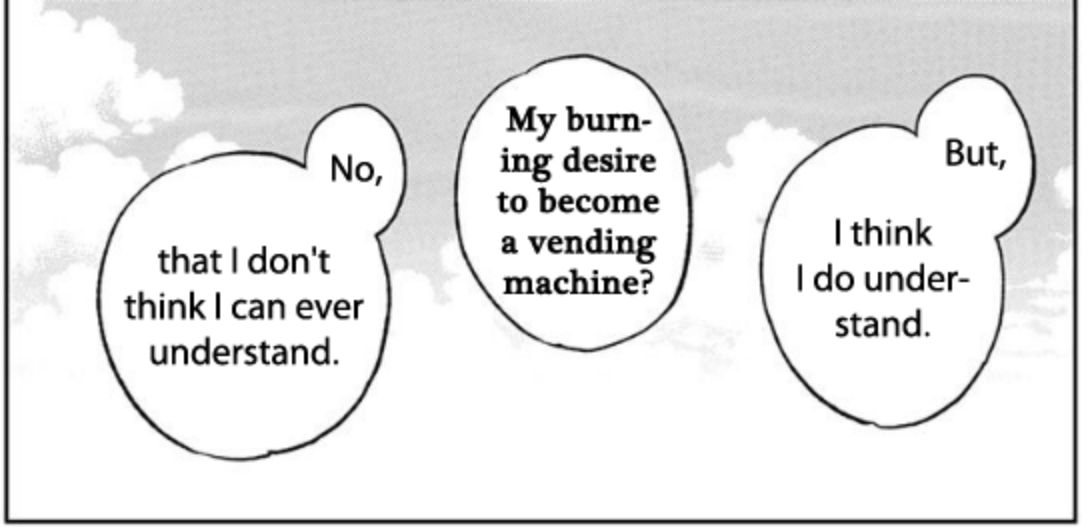

Um.
Just checking, but by vending machines,
you mean coffee-selling, soda-selling...
ma-chines like this one?
Yeah.

?


And Japan's the land of vending machines.
Vending machines provide it all.
But also cigarettes, ice cream, hamburgers, udon, beer, liquor, cup noodles...

I like to use them,
and I even like just looking at them.
Yeah, that's right.
And so you... have a love for vending machines.

That's a unique hobby.
Hmm, well...
It was a stupid hobby.


No, that I don't think I can ever understand.
My burning desire to become a vending machine?
But, I think I do understand.

They offer a clear function, with a sense of invariance and permanence.
They offer more than the sum of their products.
Simply provide money, and they will always offer warmth.

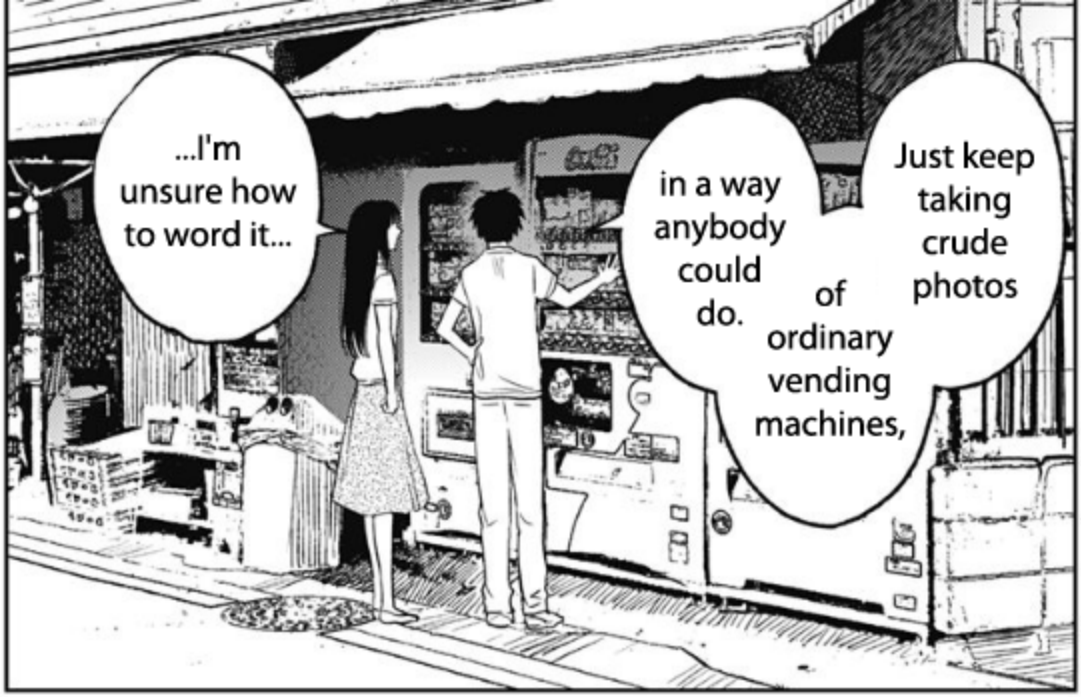
But, you see...
vending machines are always there.

Vending machines are important to us observers as well.
As they don't ignore us...
Thank you.
Wow, that's something.
You said what I wanted to say a lot better than I could.

Well, I'll have to explain something else I like.
But what would you actually want to do?
So then, it's all well and good to know you like them.

The cigar shop owner goes out in front every morning, without fail, to take a photo.
Every time I come to this cigar-ette shop, I'm reminded of a part from Paul Auster's "Smoke."

I want to imitate him and take photos that are meaningless at a glance.
That challenge to the idea of "meaning" really struck me.
...So, yeah.

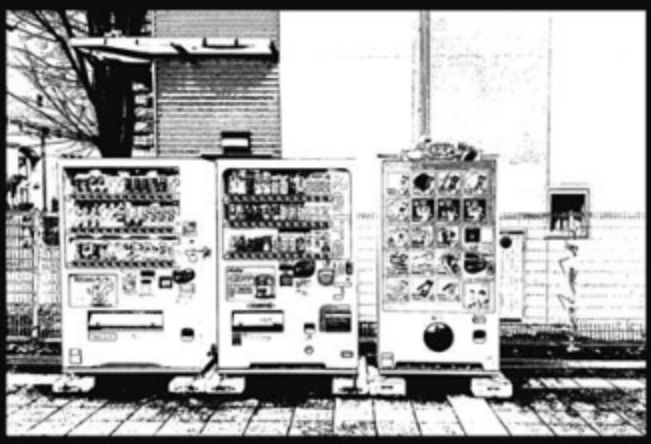

...I'm unsure how to word it...
Just keep taking crude photos of ordinary vending machines, in a way anybody could do.

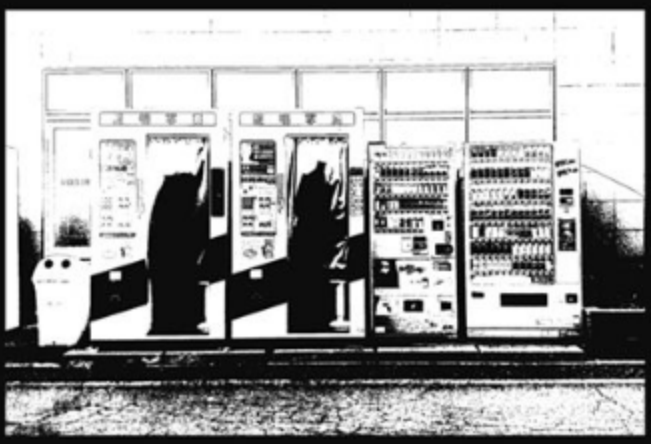
And so,
but I think I like that too.

my vending machine tours began.

Whenever I took a picture,

I tried to get the stuff around the vending machine in view as well.





What kind of area the machine was in, and in what condition...

That's what I wanted to capture.

There were many vending machines

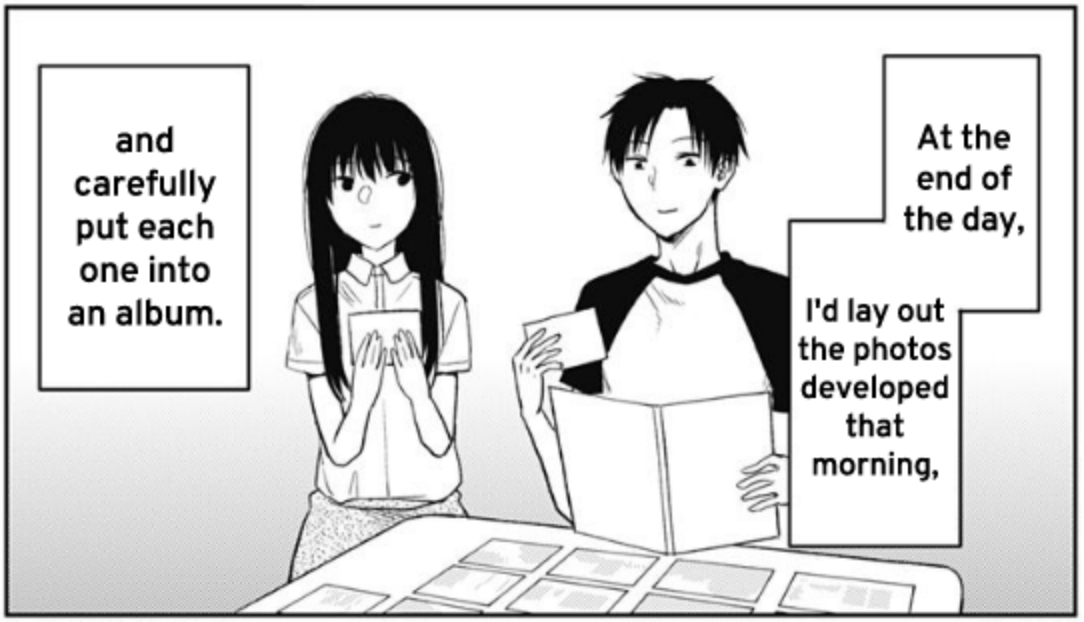
which I'd walked by countless times, yet had always overlooked.

Discoveries like that made my heart dance.

During the 30 minutes it took for the film to develop,

I would go have breakfast.

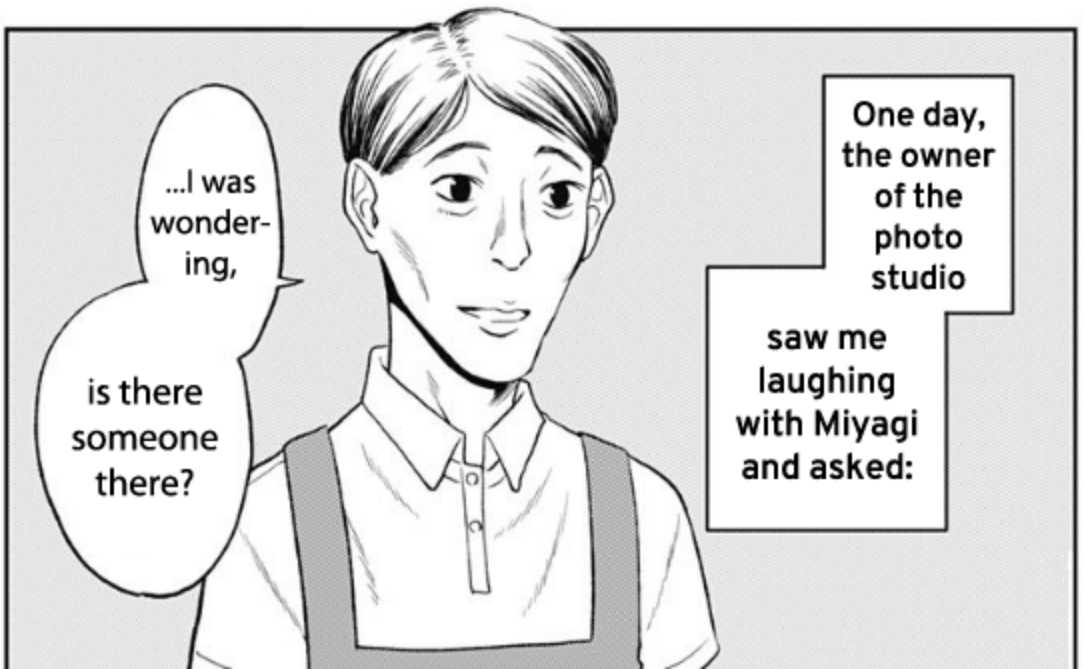
At the start of each day, I'd head for the photo studio.



and carefully put each one into an album.

At the end of the day,

I'd lay out the photos developed that morning,

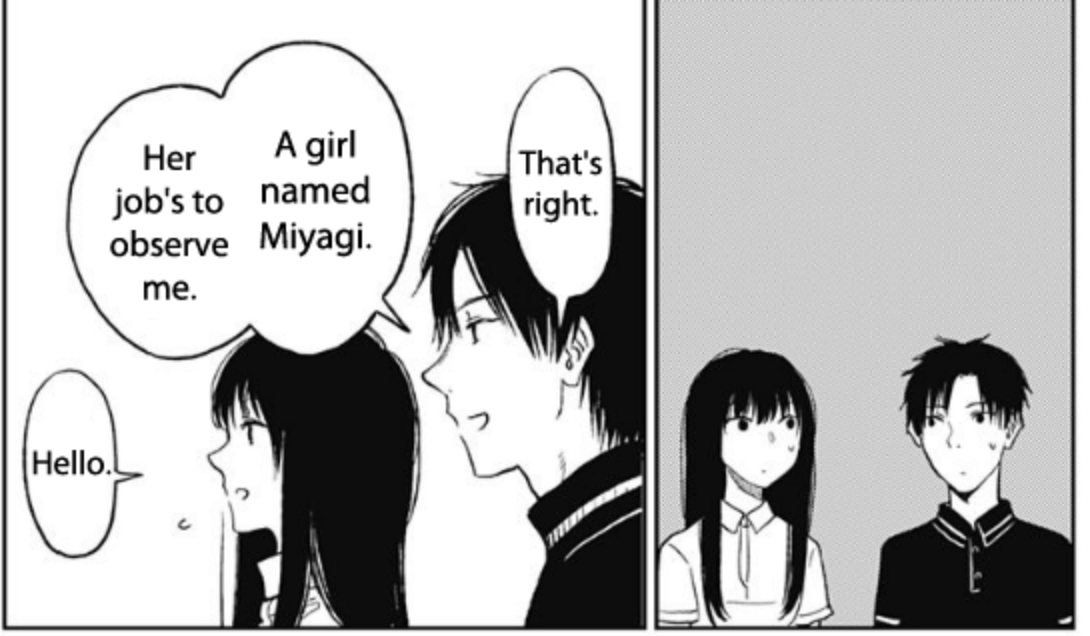


...I was wonder-ing,

is there someone there?

One day, the owner of the photo studio

saw me laughing with Miyagi and asked:

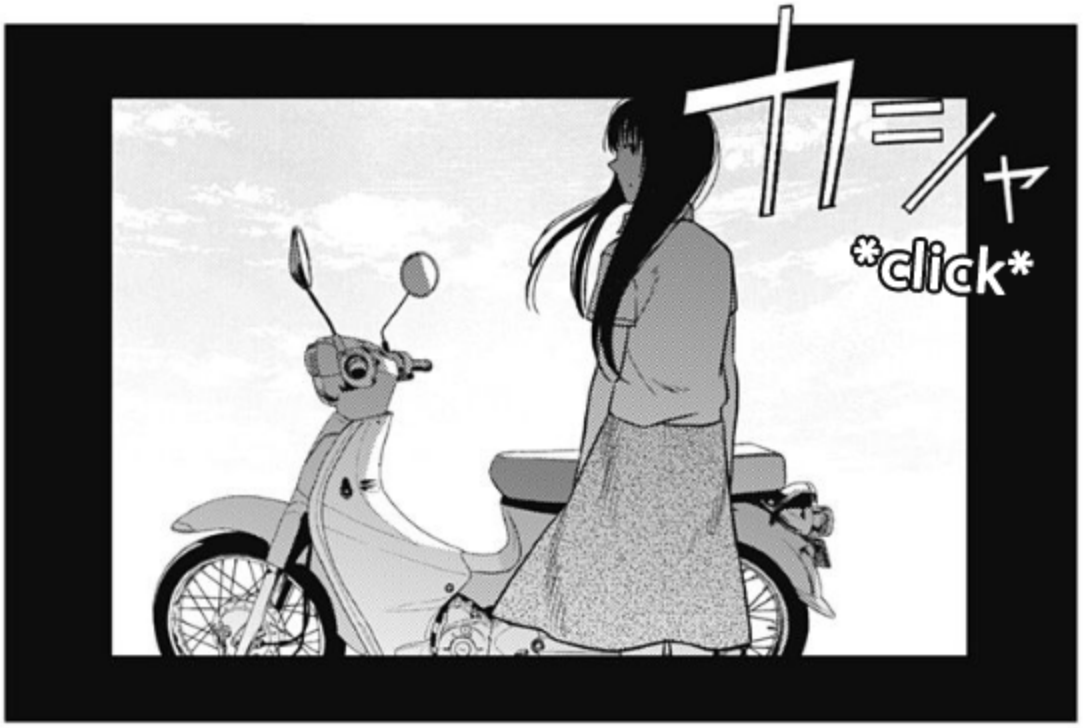

Hello.
Her job's to observe me.
A girl named Miyagi.
That's right.

they're just photos of vending machines.
Oh, no,
these strange photos... they're actually photos of her?
So then,

He readily accepted the invisible Miyagi's existence.
I see.

...he said.
Well, keep at it, then.
The owner's face told how little he understood.

PENTAX


カシャ
click

What are you doing?
Oh, just figured I'd take one, after what the photo guy said.
It will only appear as a meaningless photo of a bike to others.
All my pictures are meaningless to others.

I'd be con-cerned if they weren't.
Of course, people like the photo studio owner were the minority.
Sorry to make you wait.
Alright, let's go.
Not like I cared what anybody thought.
... Well.
The man who lived next door shot me a look of disgust.

寿命を買い取ってもらった。一年につき、一万円で。

I Sold Off My Lifespan, For 10,000 Yen A Year.

Chapter 11

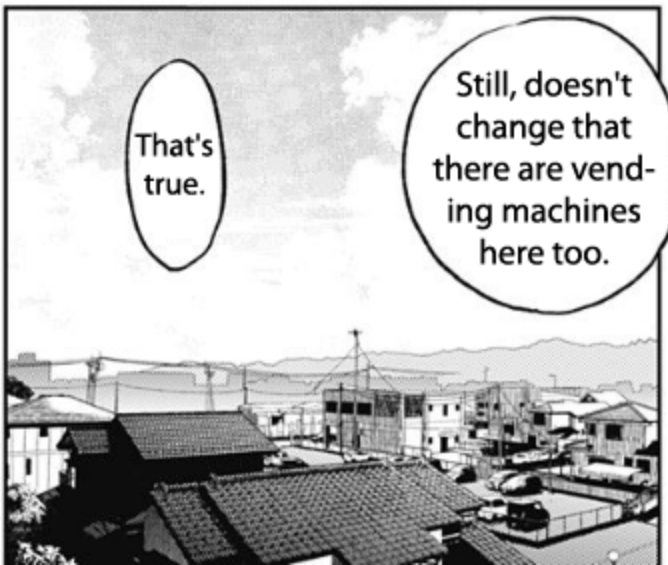
Original: Sugaru Miaki **Manga:** Shoichi Taguchi
("Three Days of Happiness" from Media Works Bunko)
Character Design: E9L / Shoichi Taguchi

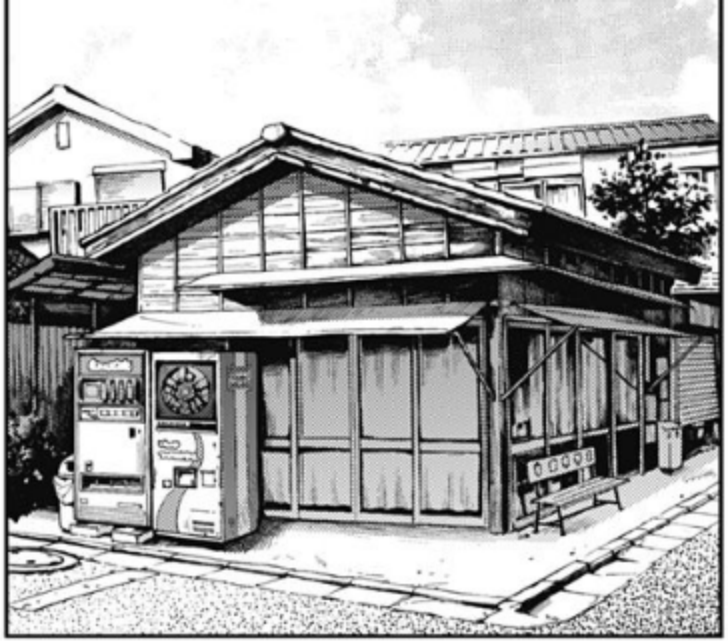
It was an utterly clear, not very windy day.
I was lost in an area which Miyagi and I had never seen nor heard of.

It seems this is your home-town, Mr. Kusunoki.
Guess when I'm lost, maybe I head this way on instinct.

After wander-ing for about two hours...
!
Hey, I know that place...

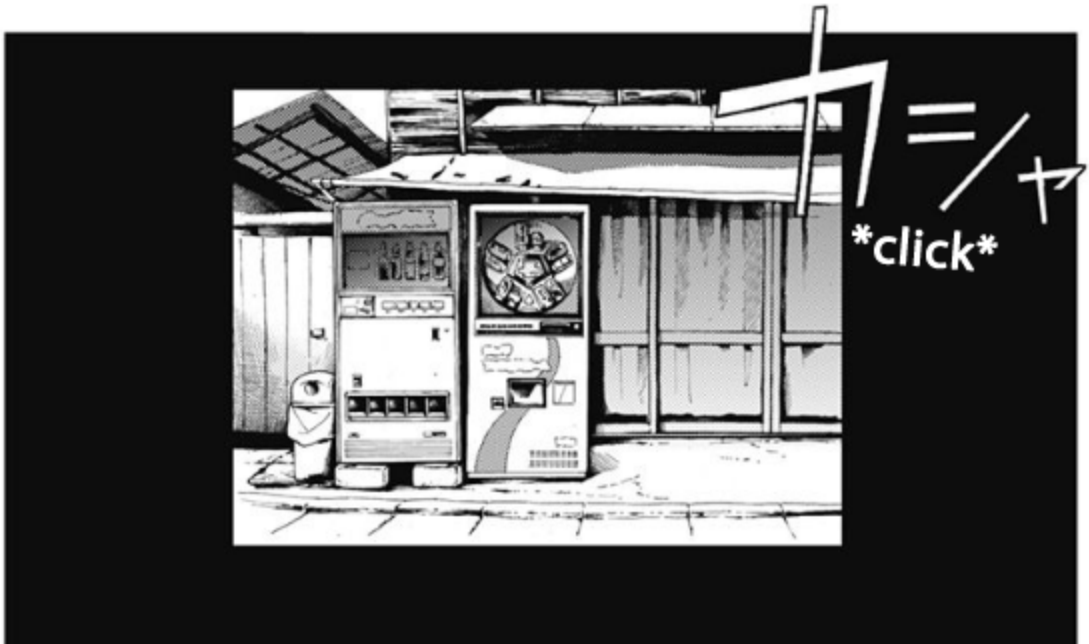
Oh!

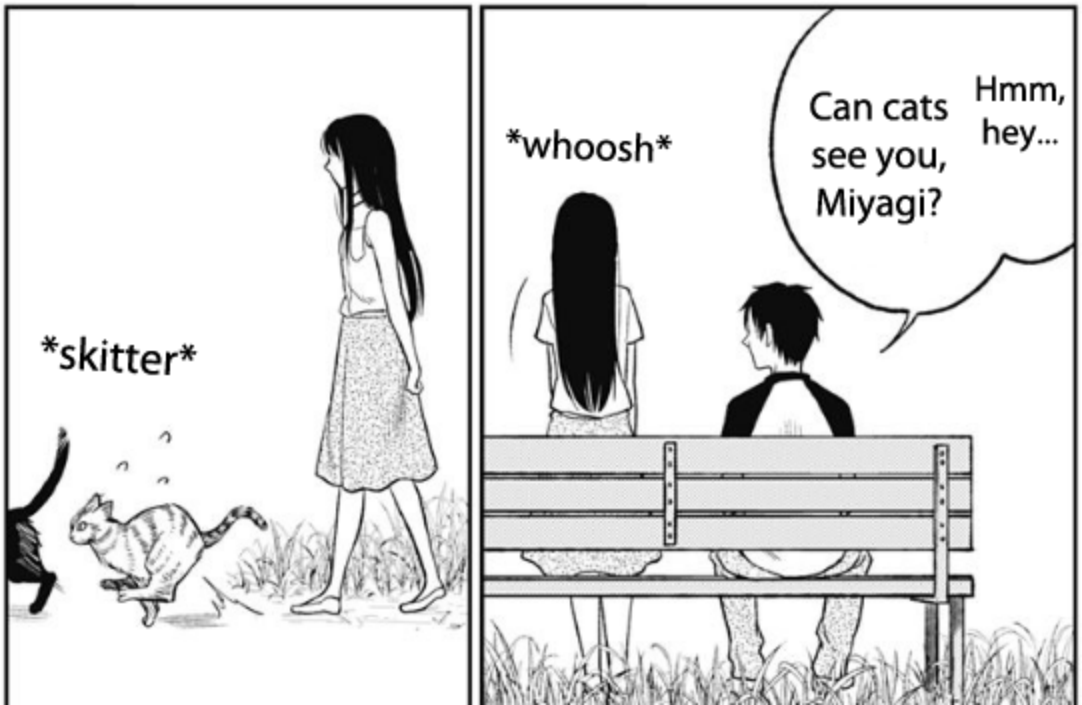

That's true.
Still, doesn't change that there are vend-ing machines here too.



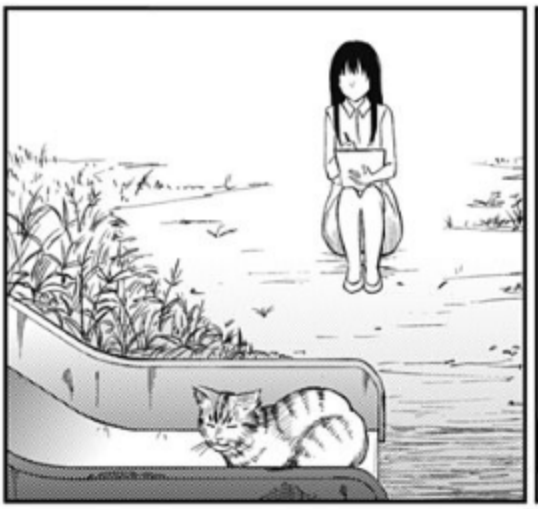
This mach-ine...
It's been here since the first time I ever visited.

A candy store.
I used to go here as a kid.
Looks like it shut down a while ago, though.


カシャ
click


skitter
whoosh
Can cats see you, Miyagi?
Hmm, hey...

As you see,
dogs and cats can see me.
Not to say that they like me, however.



Yeah.
But still,
you're not so great at it.
Yes.
Are you surprised?
So you do this for a hobby.
Which is why I'm practicing.
And isn't that great.
...
Well.
We should be moving on now.
Miyagi, could you show me
all the stuff you've drawn?

it happened as we headed for the next town,
and I passed in front of the candy store again.

After half a day exploring my hometown,

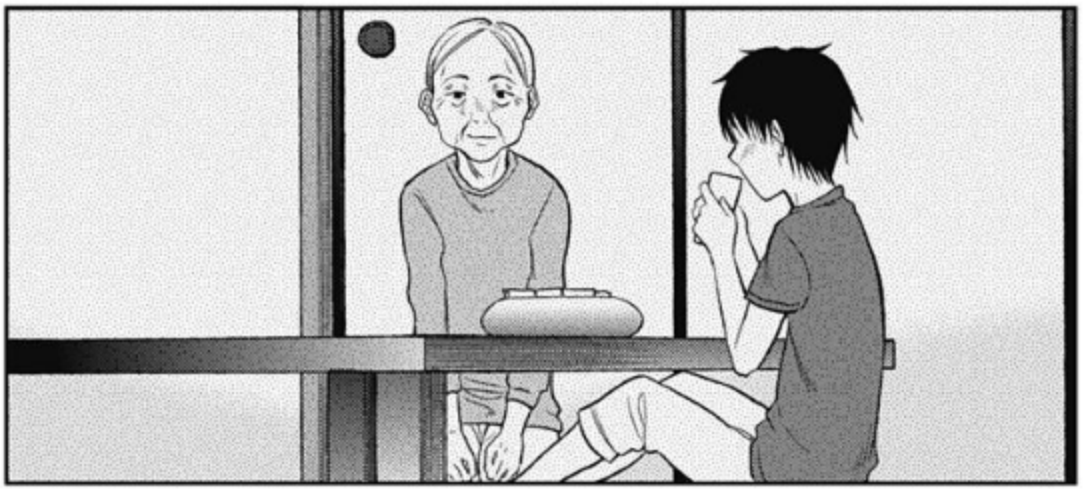
Hello.

...
You probably don't remember me, do you?
It's understandable.
It was about ten years ago I last came here.
But, personally,
I remember you very well.

When I was 8 or 9,
I fought with my mother one night and left home.
I hadn't thought ahead much,
so I went to kill time at the candy store.

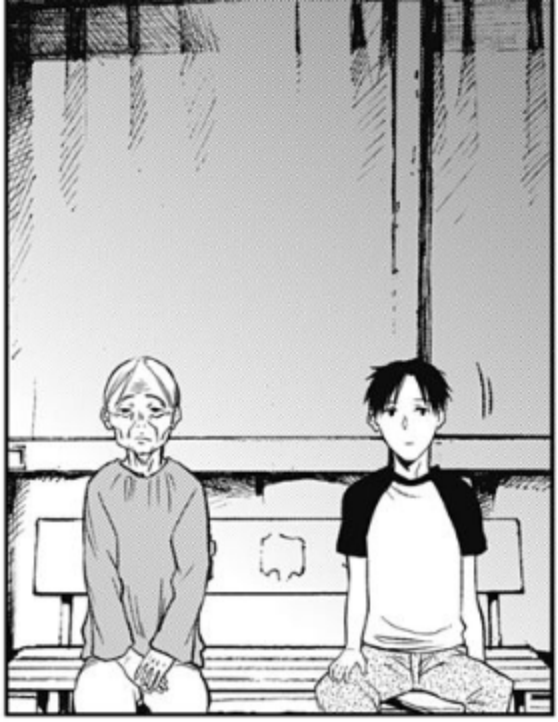
...
Don't you need to go home?

Having just had a heated argument with a parent,
I blubbered something back.
And after hearing that...



A few hours later,
a call came from my parents.
When asked if I was over there,
you replied....

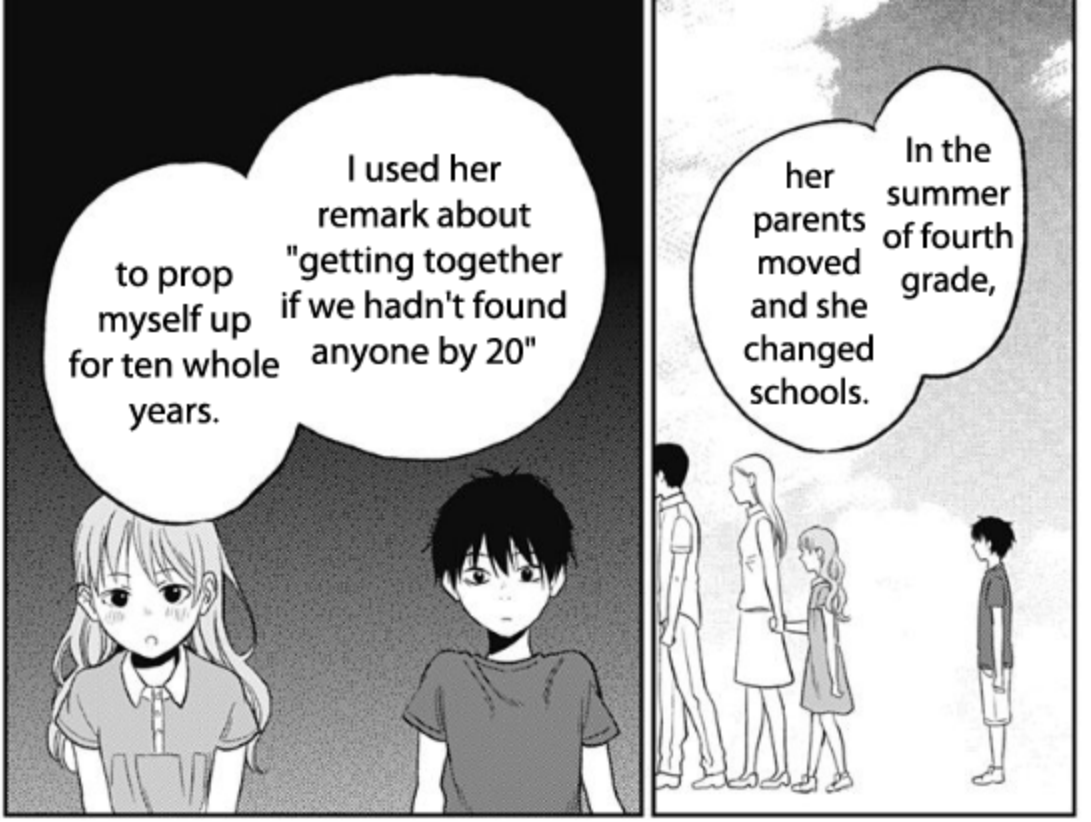
but let's say he isn't for another hour.
He is,
But...
...
Maybe you didn't think it was a big deal at all.
that I can still put my deepest hopes in someone - or at least, so I've convinced myself.
I think it's thanks to that experience



then I'm sure you've for-gotten about Himeno too.
If you've forgotten about me,
I often came to the store with her...

I could handle any bullying just fine.
Just having her by my side,

Yet...
Both Himeno and I were black sheep at school.


I used her remark about "getting together if we hadn't found anyone by 20"
to prop myself up for ten whole years.
In the summer of fourth grade,
her parents moved and she changed schools.

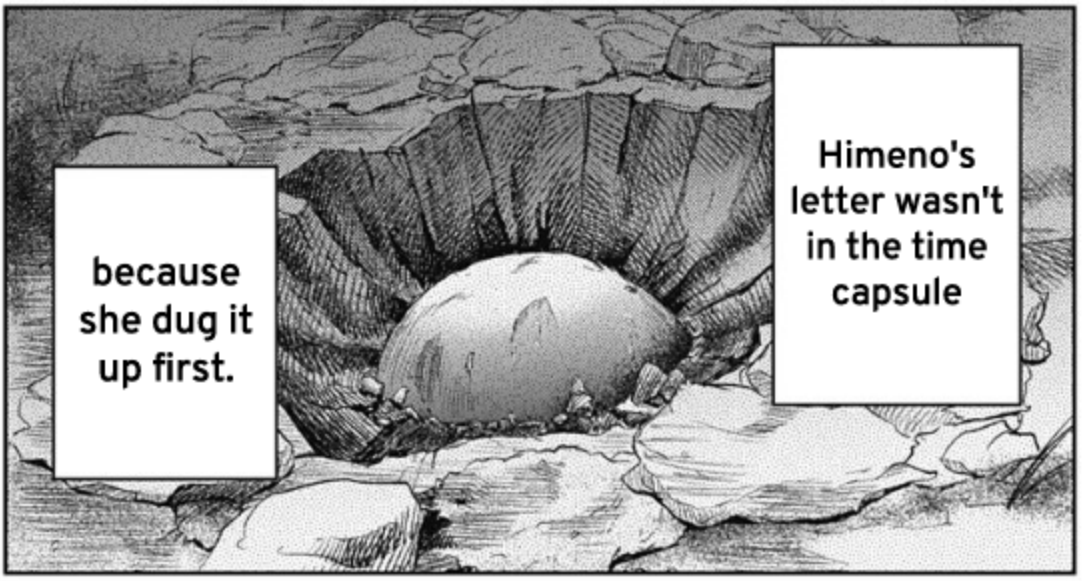
How-ever,
it seems that any fondness Himeno may have had for me
turned into a vicious hate at some point.

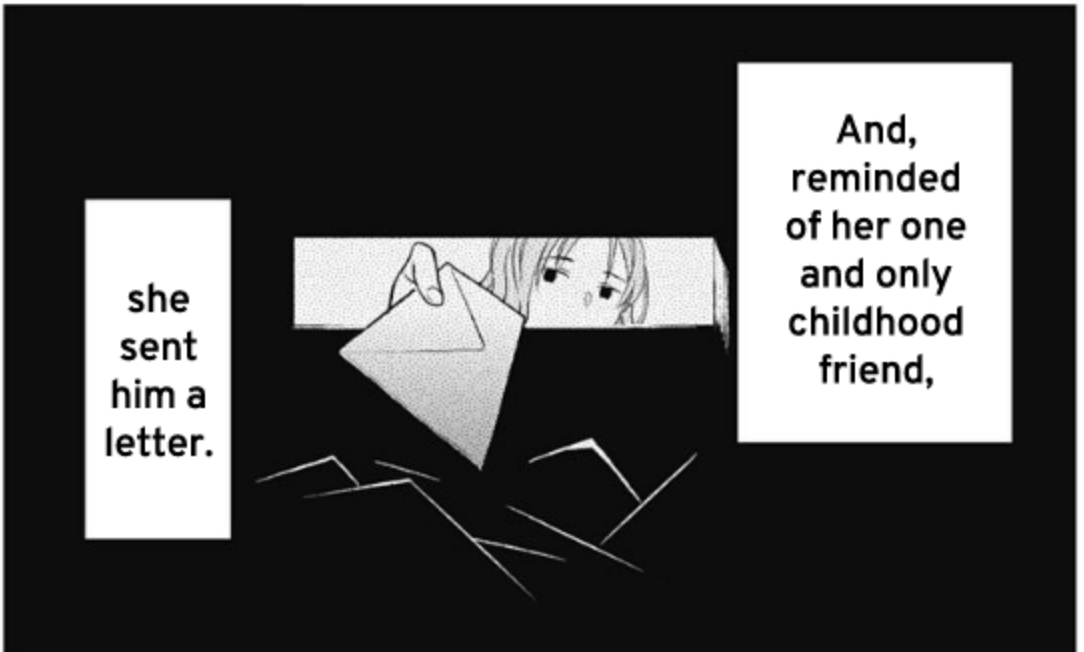
Just what did I do wrong?
I kept thinking about it.
Then one day, I suddenly remembered
the letter I got from Himeno when I was 17.

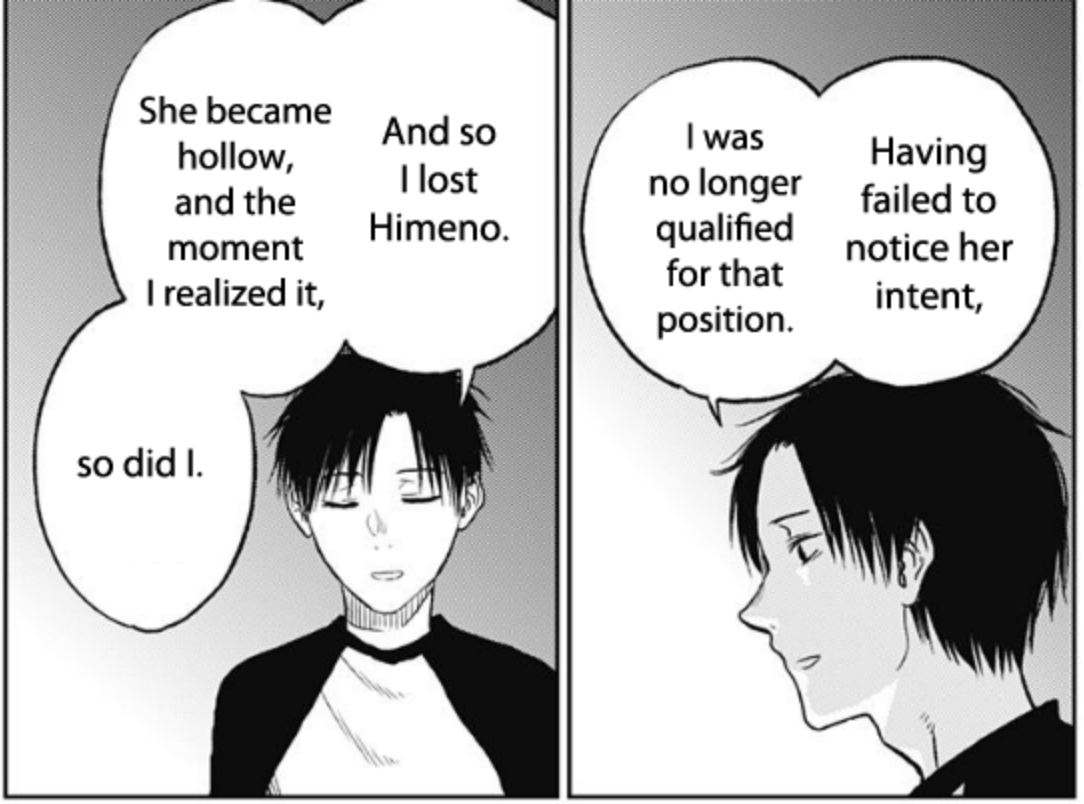
She was never the sort of person to write friendly letters to others.
So the moment a letter from her arrived...
I really should have realized.

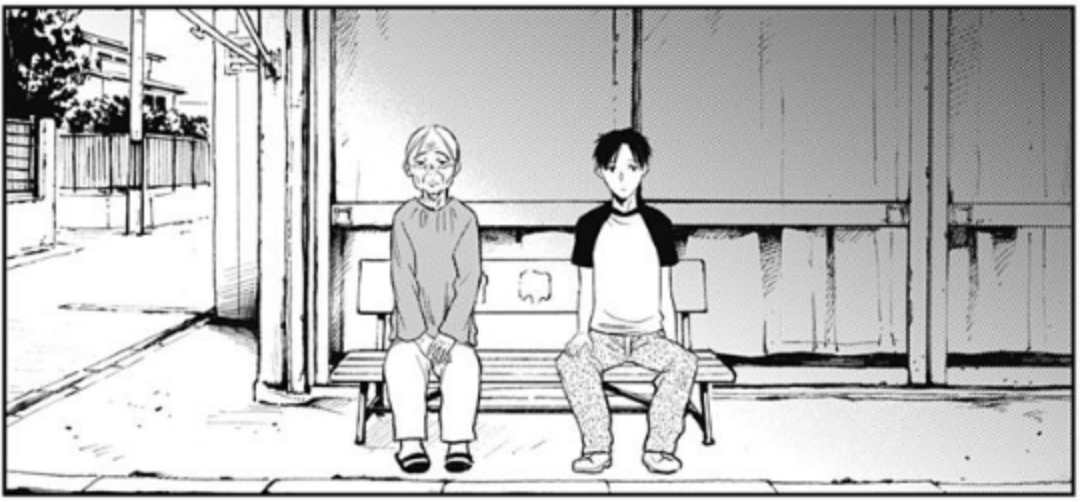
Now.
That letter was Himeno's form of an SOS.
How about we compare answers.

Much like me, when she was feeling cornered, she clung to her past.
she must have been seeking my help with that letter.
Back then,


because she dug it up first.
Himeno's letter wasn't in the time capsule

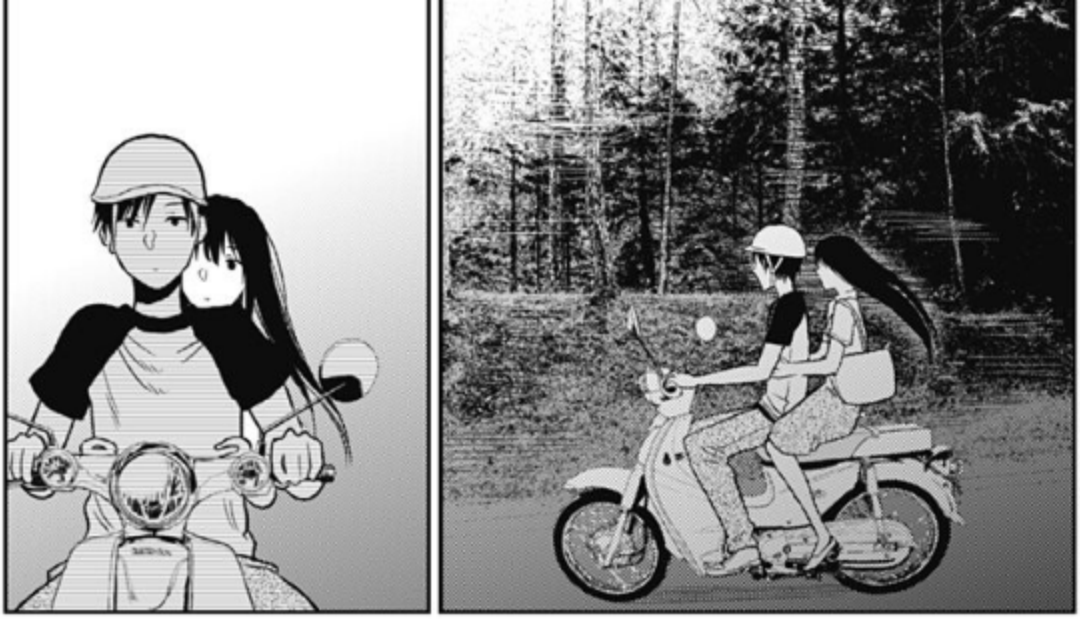

she sent him a letter.
And, reminded of her one and only childhood friend,


Having failed to notice her intent,
I was no longer qualified for that position.
And so I lost Himeno.
She became hollow, and the moment I realized it,
so did I.



...It's probably a bad place to stop,
but that's this gloomy story's end.
I'm terribly sorry for making you sit through all that.

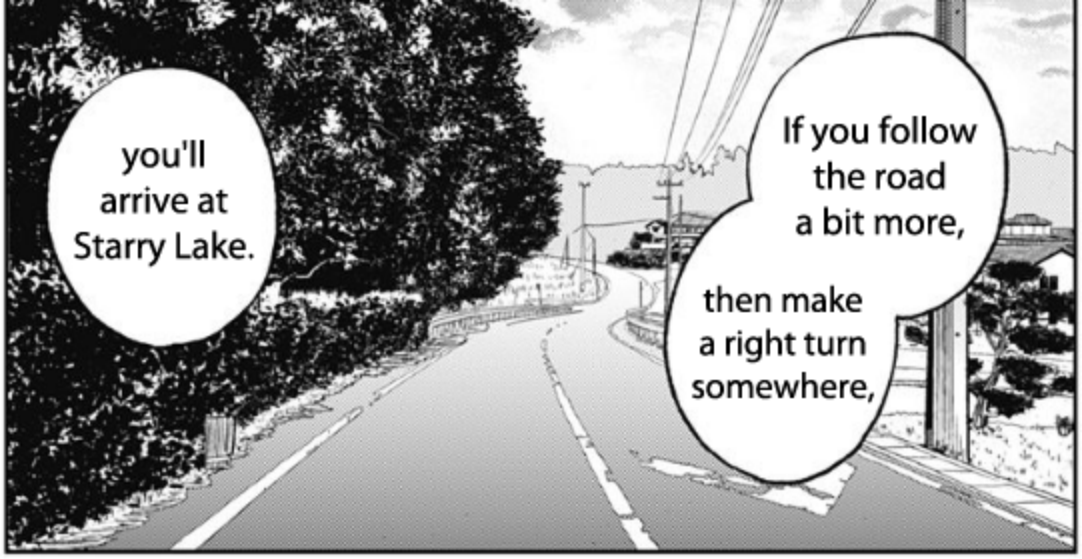
Good-
bye.
Thank you
very much.
Good-
bye.



What?
I'll tell you something good.

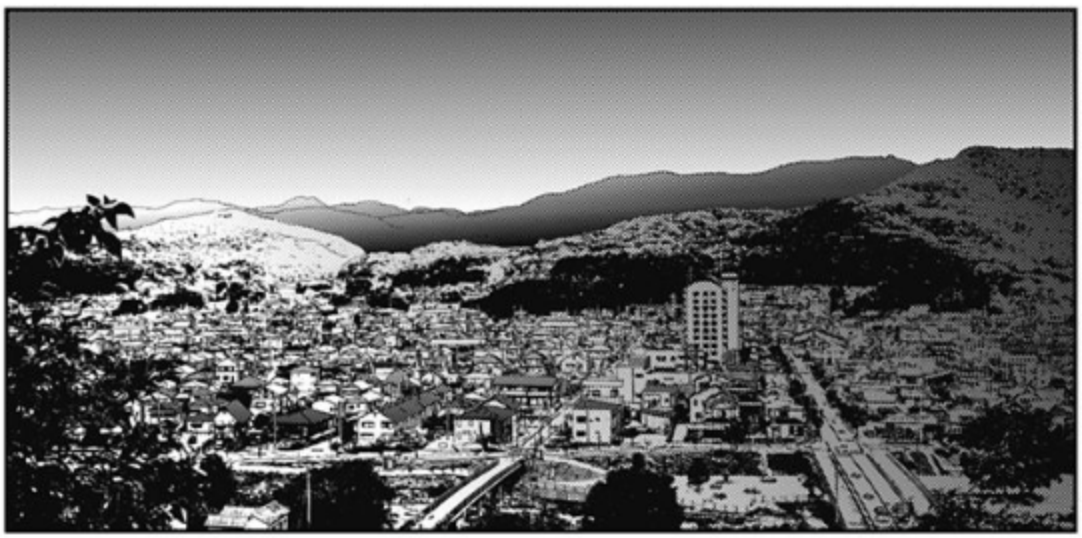
Mr. Kusunoki? Mr. Kusunoki.

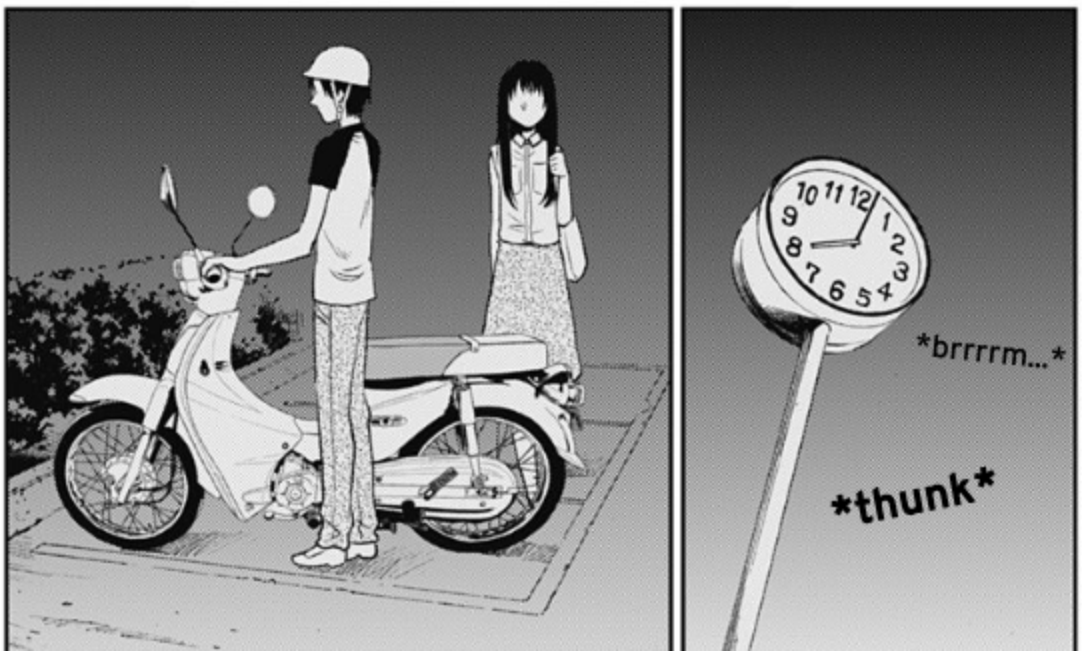
Long before I became an observer.
I just remembered.
I've been on this road before.


If you follow the road a bit more,
then make a right turn somewhere,
you'll arrive at Starry Lake.

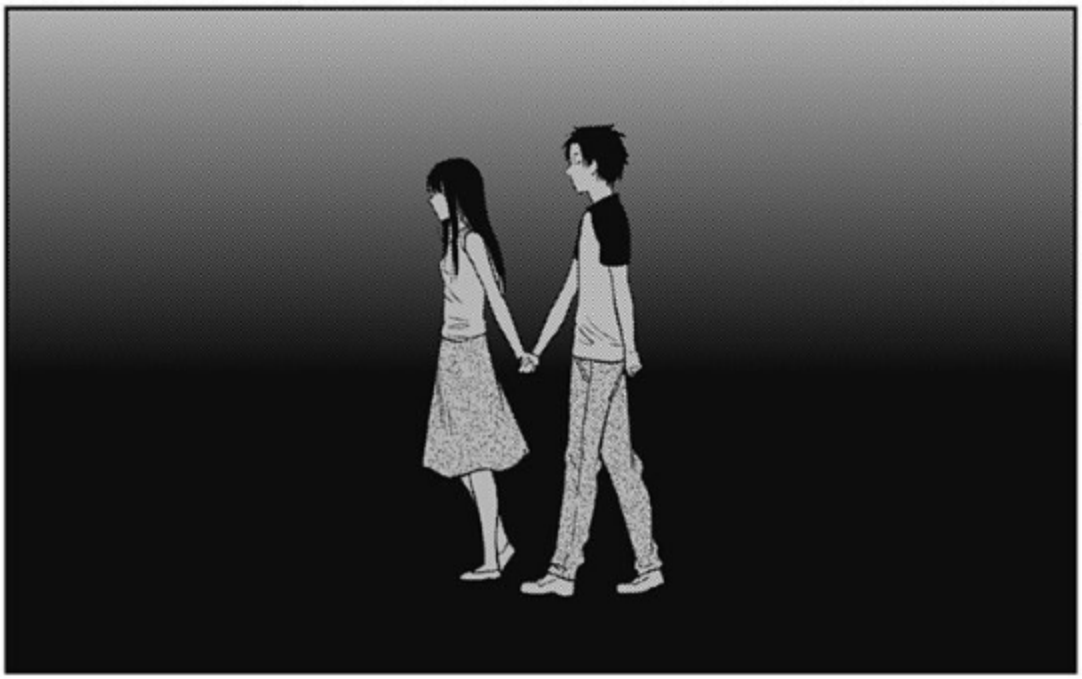
Starry Lake?
The lake I said I wanted to visit before I died.
It's what I call it.
Oh yeah, you did tell me about that.

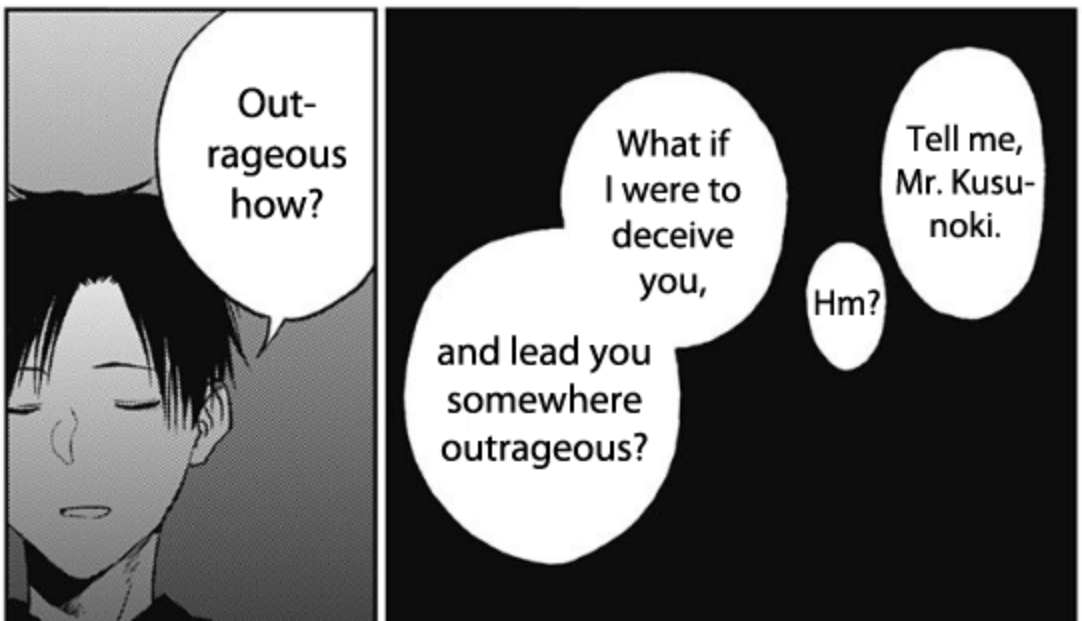
Now wasn't that something good?
Yeah,
it sure was.



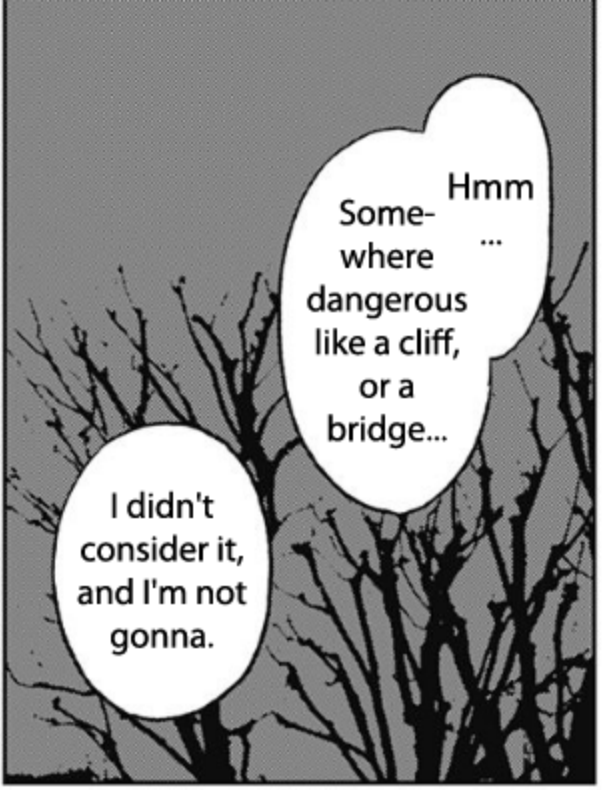

brrrrm...
thunk

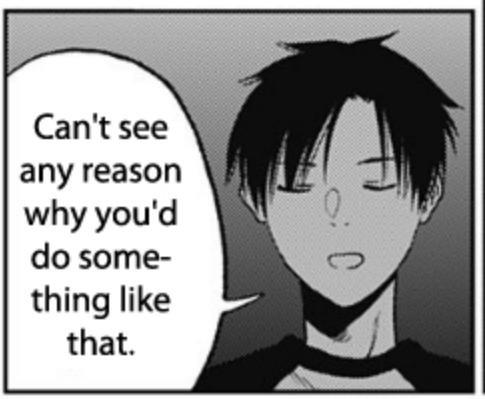
Now,
listen carefully to what I tell you.
You don't want to show me until we're right there, huh?
Keep your eyes closed until I tell you to open them.
I will guide you along.
Now close your eyes.
do you not want to see the stars in the best of conditions as well?
So long as we're out here,
Yes.



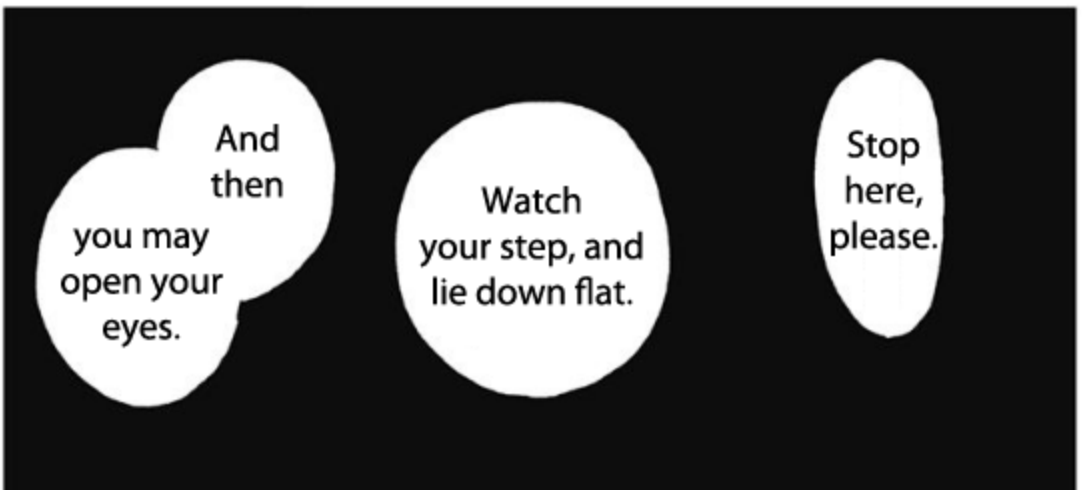

Out-
rageous
how?
What if
I were to
deceive
you,
and lead you
somewhere
outrageous?
Hm?
Tell me,
Mr. Kusu-
noki.

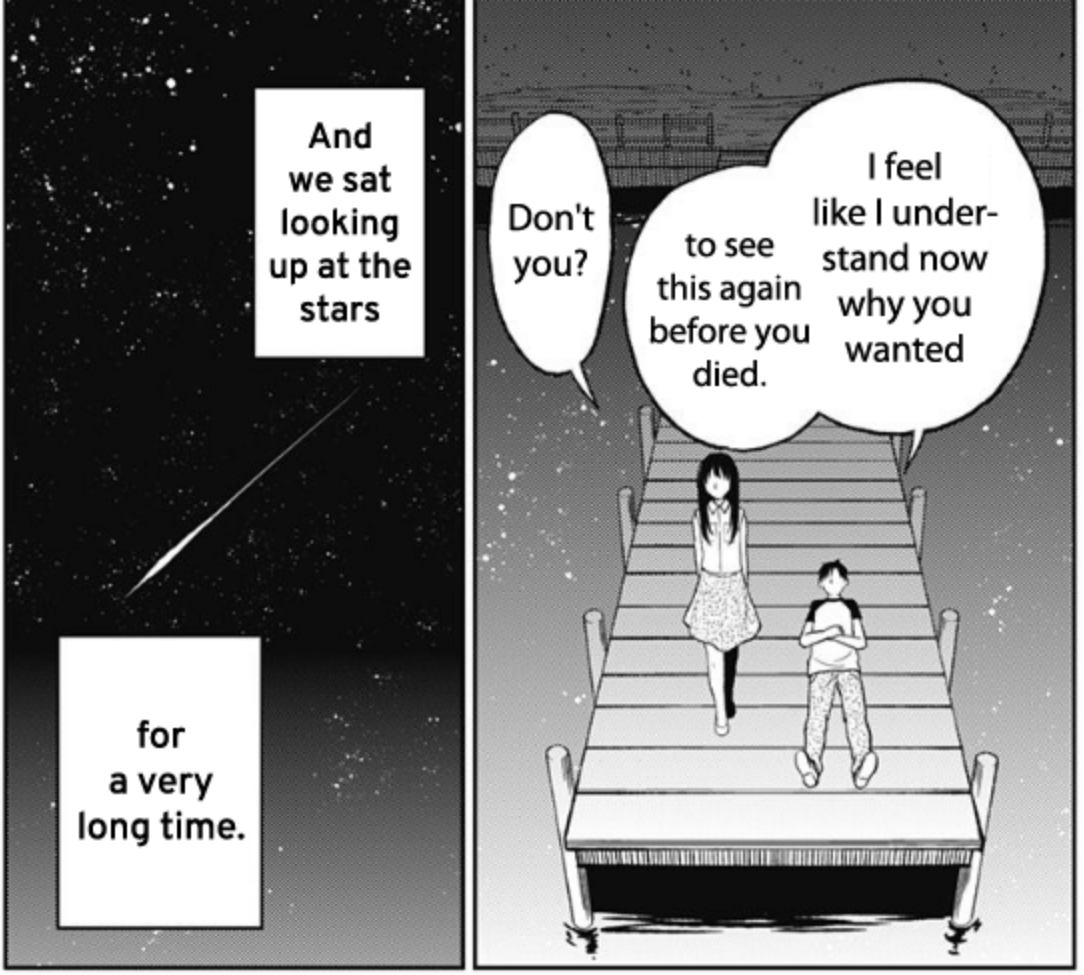
Why not?


Hmm ...
Some-where dangerous like a cliff, or a bridge...
I didn't consider it, and I'm not gonna.


Can't see any reason why you'd do some-thing like that.

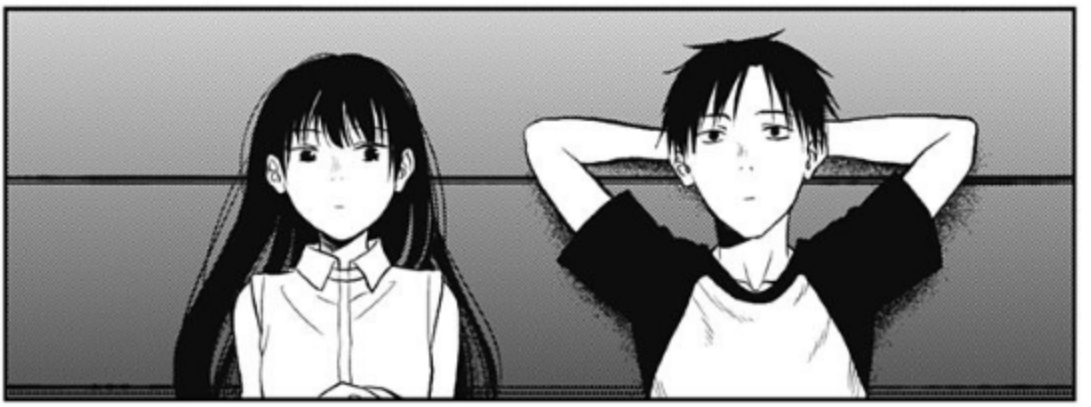
Is that right.


And then you may open your eyes.
Watch your step, and lie down flat.
Stop here, please.

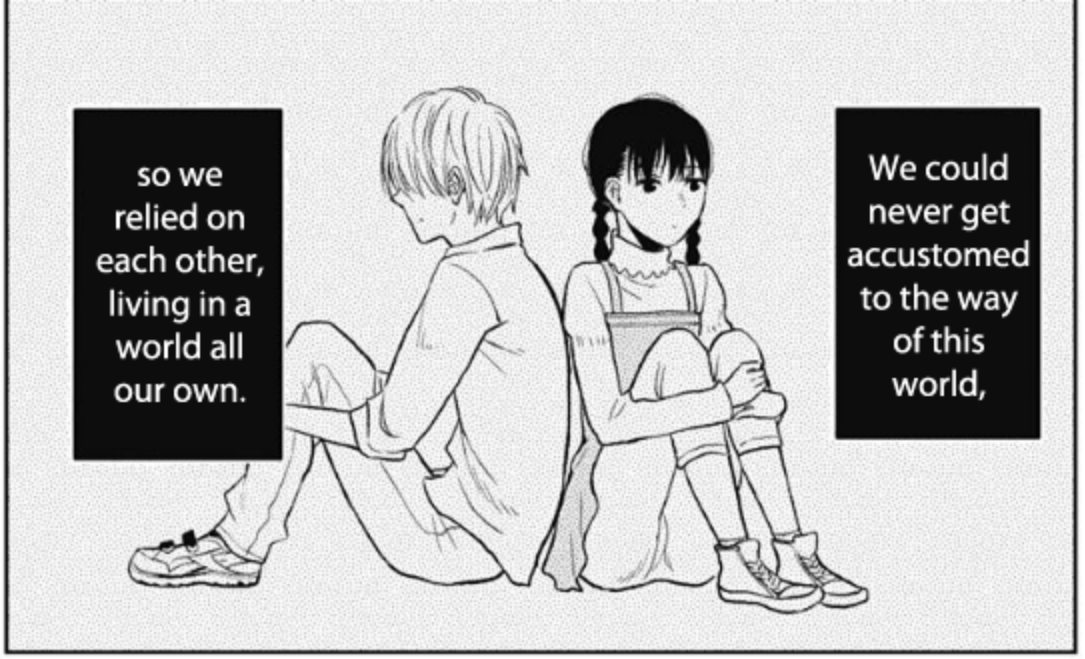

And we sat looking up at the stars
for a very long time.
Don't you?
I feel like I understand now why you wanted to see this again before you died.

Like saying Himeno barely remembered me.
You've lied for my sake, haven't you?
... Miyagi.

Is that the "person important to you" you mentioned before?
Indeed.
I also... had a childhood friend.

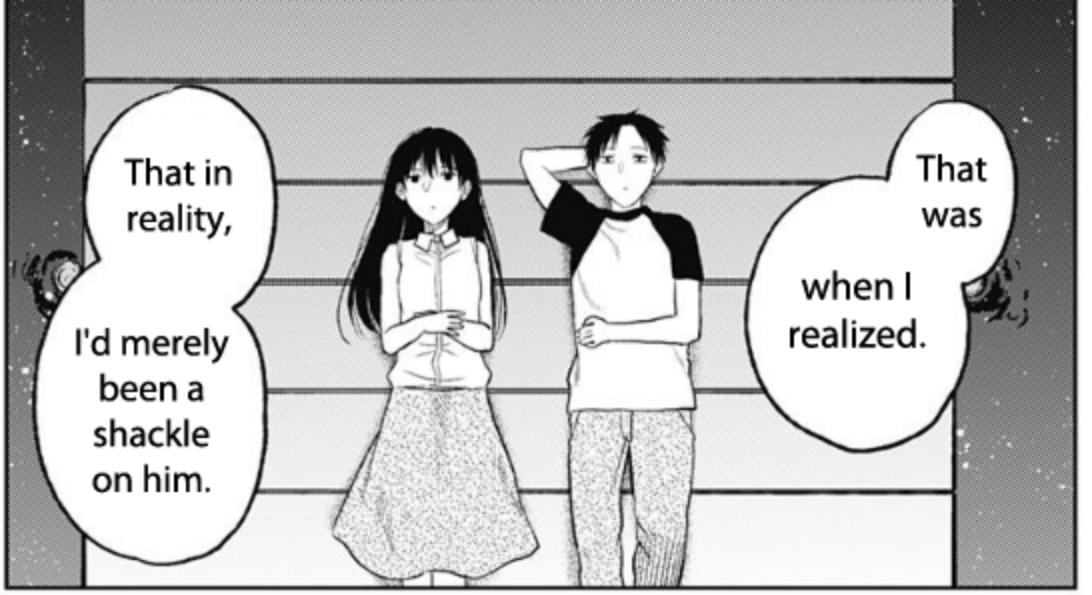


I once had someone in my life who was to me
as Ms. Himeno was to you.


We could never get accustomed to the way of this world,
so we relied on each other, living in a world all our own.

On my first day off after becoming an observer,
the first thing I did was check on him.
I had expected that he would be grieving terribly over my disappear-ance.

... How-ever,
in a matter of weeks,
he had all too quickly adapted to a world without me.


That in reality,
I'd merely been a shackle on him.
That was when I realized.

I wanted him to despair, and wait for my return...
I think I wanted to have made him unhappy.
To be entirely honest,

that he could make it on his own.
I didn't want to learn the truth

...
I have not gone to see him since.
And yet, you'd still wanna see him before you died?
Yes. Because I don't know anything else.
It's the only thing I can cling to.

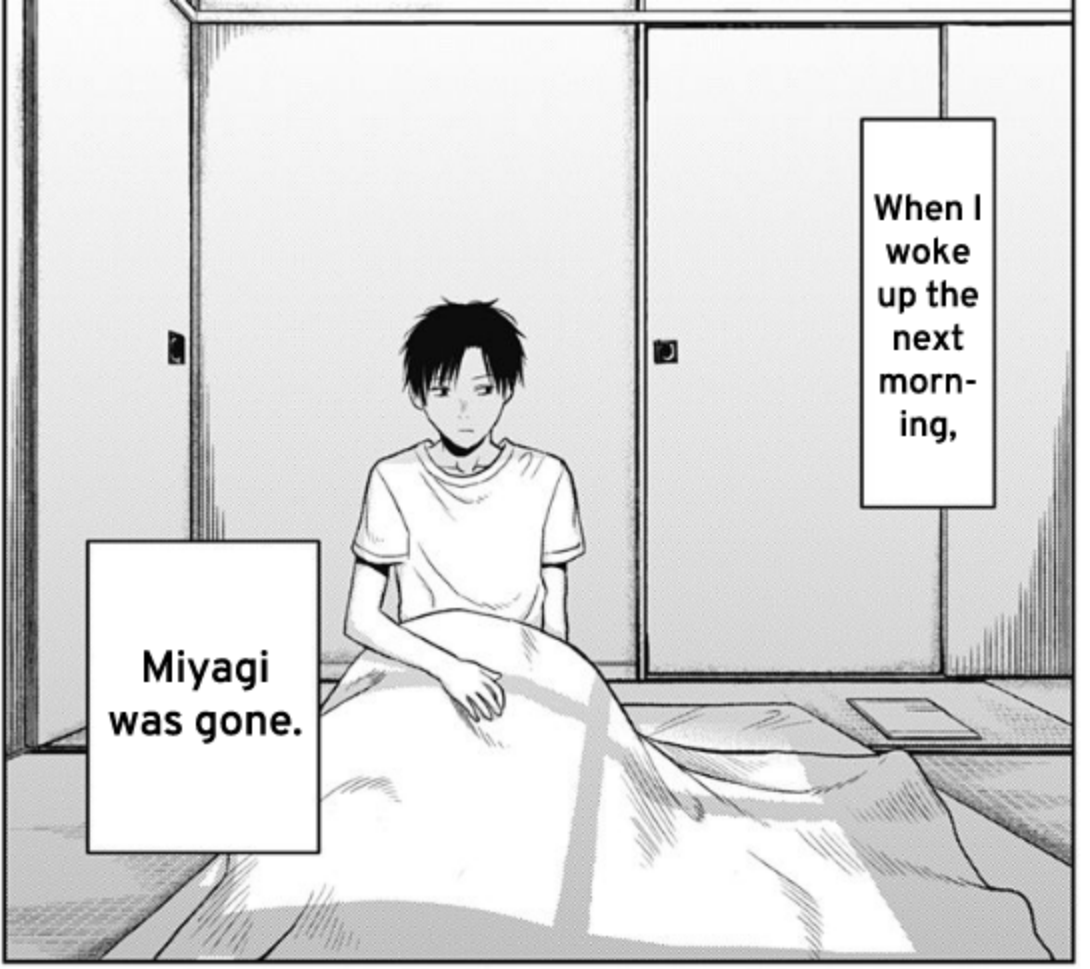
That's why
I can very much understand how you feel.

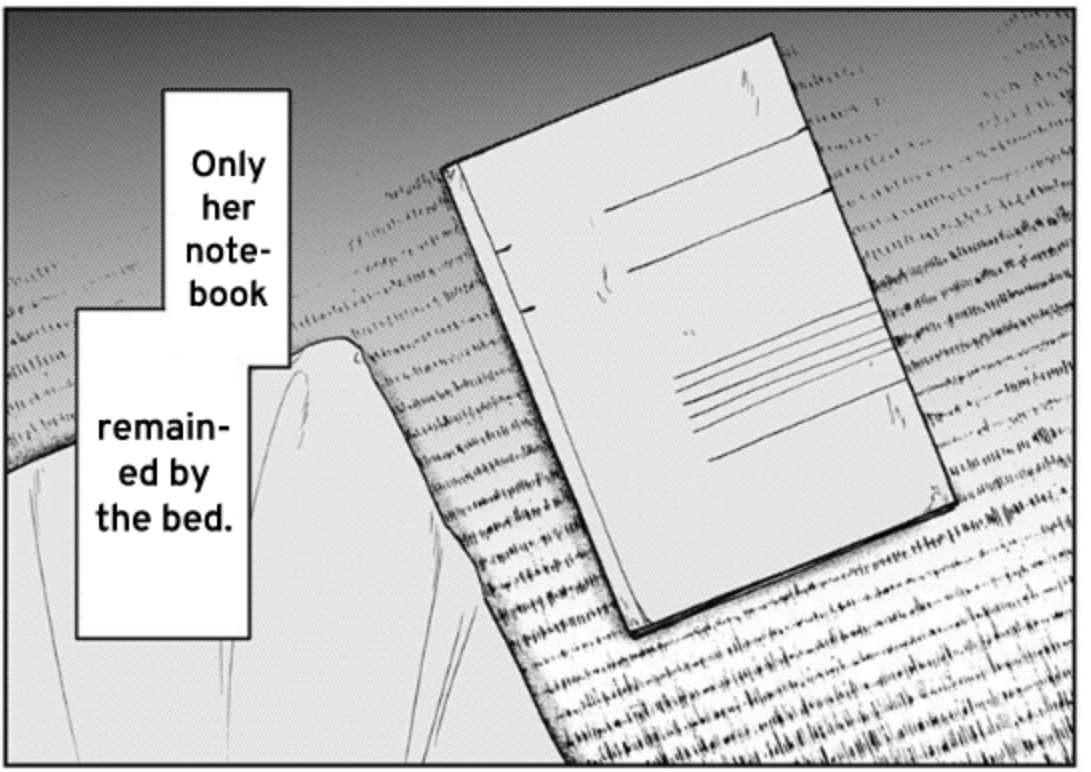
Though perhaps you don't want me to.
Nah.

Don't mention it.

Thanks for under-standing.

"Only because today was so tiring,"
Miyagi dove into the bed.
I tried to sneak
just one glance at Miyagi, but...
I should have wished on a shooting star
that things could just go on like this.


When I woke up the next morn-ing,
Miyagi was gone.


Only her note-book
remain-ed by the bed.